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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE PRINCIPAL/ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL RELATIONSHIP

by

LOUIS P. KLOSTER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **THE PRINCIPAL/ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL RELATIONSHIP** submitted by **LOUIS P. KLOSTER** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **MASTER OF EDUCATION.**

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ABSTRACT

In this interpretive study, the working relationship between a principal and his or her assistant principal(s) was investigated. Thirteen administrators from six elementary and elementary/junior high schools in the Edmonton area were interviewed. Content analysis provided valuable information regarding the principal/assistant principal relationship.

The working relationships that were studied had changed and had grown. Increased trust and confidence and a greater understanding of each other were two of the results of working together over a period of time. Administrators in general tended to perceive assistant principals as helpers and supporters, although most viewed the relationship as a partnership or a team.

Numerous factors that contribute to a positive working relationship were revealed. Each administrative team was unique due to situational variables in the school and the personal qualities that each individual possessed. However, in each case, the administrators shared a similar philosophy to children and education and, yet, complemented each other with their own abilities, interests, and experiences.

Communication was identified as a very significant component. Administrators emphasized the need to keep each other informed, to consult with and listen to one another, and to plan together. Therefore, shared administration time was deemed essential.

Administrators described a team approach to administration as one that was founded on both shared and allocated duties and responsibilities. Teamwork was also characterized by mutual trust, support, and respect. All team members were involved in the decision-making process and, therefore, felt a sense of involvement and commitment in the school. Decisions were made both jointly and independently, although the principal was ultimately responsible. A high degree of openness in the relationships facilitated the great deal of learning that took place between team members.

Years of administrative experience, years of working together, and other demographic variables also influenced the relationship.

Some factors that hindered a positive working relationship were identified, as were the benefits of working well together. Finally, respondents offered valuable advice, based on their own experiences, to school administrators and those aspiring to administrative positions.

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CHAPTER ONE

Identification of the Research Problem

While the administrators in a school must work closely with one another in accomplishing the organizational and educational goals of the school, each administrator is an individual with a philosophy and with perceptions of his or her own. Administrative duties are divided between the principal and assistant principal. Since some tasks and responsibilities are shared between the two, a relationship develops between the members of the administrative dyad. In some cases, they work well together, like a partnership or a team; sometimes the relationship is not as close. There are various factors that may influence that relationship.

While studies have examined the duties of the principal and, more recently, the assistant principal, little has been done to investigate the relationship between these two school administrators. Greenfield claimed: "There have been few studies of the assistant principal's role and very little critical or creative thinking has been done regarding that role and its relationship to the roles of principal, teacher, and department head" (1985, p. 7).

Most studies have investigated the relationship between the principal and assistant principal in regard to division of labor. However, in another sense, the two individuals in these positions interact with one another, influence one another, and work

together on various tasks. Wallace described this interaction:

> Interaction involves a process of negotiation between actors according to their perspectives--the meanings, norms and use of resources that they and others may use to achieve their ends. This is a dialectical, give-and-take process. . . . Individuals' perspectives may be reinforced or changed through interaction. (1987, p. 142)

Although previous studies have focused on distribution of administrative tasks, they do not describe how the distribution is arrived at, and how administrators work together or with each other to accomplish them. Consequently, there is an inadequate amount of information that explains how administrators relate to one another in a school as they carry out their work. As partners in school leadership, the administrators and the type of relationship that develops between them may have a significant influence on students and staff, school climate, the realization of educational goals, and school effectiveness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the working relationship between principals and assistant principals in selected schools in Alberta.

Research Question

How do principals and assistant principals view their working relationships?

Subquestions.

The following questions are more specific and provided a framework for the interview questions. These research questions

clarify the general types of information I expected to obtain in examining positive principal/assistant principal relationships.

1. How has that relationship developed and changed, and how has it been maintained?
2. How do co-administrators communicate regarding administrative matters?
3. How do the principal and the assistant principal(s) make administrative decisions?
4. What factors, personal or situational, promote or hinder the development of a positive working relationship between school administrators?
5. Based on their own insights and experiences, what advice would administrators give others, in regard to building a positive working relationship with co-administrators?

Significance of the Problem

Within a school, there are often two or more individuals responsible for administration, generally a principal and an assistant principal. They work together in managing the school organization. This study was designed to provide insight into the working relationship between these co-administrators. The results should be relevant to school administrators as well as to those aspiring to administrative positions. The results of the study may be helpful in preparing for the demands that arise within a leadership position and may lead to increased awareness of the important components of a positive working relationship between

two school administrators. Perhaps, by becoming more conscious and aware of factors that influence these relationships, administrators can better understand and work towards more effective working relationships.

Certain factors that contribute to a positive working relationship have been uncovered. The findings may be useful to school boards and superintendents when they appoint principals and vice-principals.

The findings also shed some light on the effects of the principal/assistant principal relationship on school climate and the accomplishment of administrative tasks.

Lastly, it is hoped that this investigation will lead to further research with respect to relationships between co-administrators, job satisfaction, and school effectiveness.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to clarify the meaning of certain terms used in this thesis.

Administrative dyad. The principal and assistant principal in a school.

Administrator. One who manages and supervises operations in a school; a principal or assistant principal.

Perspective. "A co-ordinated set of ideas and actions a person uses in dealing with some problematic situation; a person's ordinary way of thinking and feeling about and acting in such a situation" (Pansegrau, 1983,p. 10).

Relationship. The state of affairs existing between two people.

Principal. The person formally responsible for the management and operation of a school.

Assistant principal. Interchangeable with 'vice-principal'; the person next in authority to the principal of a school.

Administrative team. A group of administrators working closely together to accomplish common goals; more specifically, the principal and the assistant principal(s) in a school.

Assumptions

The research was conducted with the assumption that participants were open and honest in their responses. It is also assumed that the semi-structured interviews used in the study provided reliable records of the perceptions held by the respondents.

Delimitations

The study was restricted to four elementary schools and two elementary/junior high schools in the Edmonton area. This delimitation was felt to be necessary for the thorough and manageable study of relationships between school administrators.

Limitations

The school administrators that participated in the study were not representative of all administrative dyads, and, since it is an interpretive study, the findings are not generalizable to administrative dyads and teams in other schools. However, in

order to provide broader perspectives of the relationship between a principal and his or her assistant(s), participants were chosen from schools that varied in type and size.

The study may also have been limited by the participants' degree of openness and my interpretation of the data.

Organization of the Thesis

This chapter, Chapter One, included a description of the context of the problem, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, its limitations and delimitations, the assumptions under which the study was conducted, and the definition of important terms.

Chapter Two contains a review of relevant literature and related research, as well as the conceptual framework of the study.

In Chapter Three, the research design and methodology are discussed, and ethical considerations for the study are stated.

Categorical analysis of the data is presented in Chapter Four, followed by a discussion of the major underlying themes.

Finally, Chapter Five contains a summary, some personal reflections, a comparison of the research findings to literature, a discussion of implications based on the data, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In the past, research focused on the role of the principal and the role of the assistant principal. Researchers studied the duties and tasks of each, but very little research investigated the relationship between the two school administrators.

Administrative Teams

The administrative team approach has received some support from a number of authors. Sprague described the team concept as "an approach to administration which assumes that individuals perform best and are most satisfied when they are meaningfully involved in school decision making and have an opportunity for real personal growth in the school" (1973, p. 29).

Austin, in a 1972 study of assistant principals, uncovered ample evidence from many informal sources that:

> "teaming" has become a reality in many of our larger secondary schools. Teaming relationships have been successful in breaking down some rather difficult barriers between administrators and other members of the school community. . . . that such relationships are increasing in general practice; that such teams are much more effective in serving the school community than are clear, sharply defined and discrete job descriptions. (p. 70)

Differing Perceptions of the Vice-Principalship

Bates and Shank suggested the development of an associate principalship and made a similar claim regarding the distribution of tasks and responsibilities: "Generally the assistant is perceived to be a technician, assuming narrowly defined

responsibilities based on the number of jobs the principal does not wish to do and on the amount of authority the principal will share or relinquish" (1983, p. 111). An associate principal, on the other hand, would share "the same mix of responsibilities as the principal, assuming an equivalent portion of discipline problems, staff evaluation, and supervision of curriculum areas" (p. 112).

Downing also described the traditional role of the assistant principal but then suggested increased involvement in all administrative matters:

> The assistant principal is an extension of the principal for whom he/she works. Therefore, the assistant principal must be involved in every aspect of the administration. . . . The assistant principalship is generally thought of as a stepping stone to a principalship. However, it is, perhaps, time that the assistant principalship be developed as a career goal in itself. (1983, p. 10)

Despite these claims, Austin concluded from his normative study that "principals see assistant principals as vested with much more discretion and authority than the assistant principals think they have" (1972, p. 70).

Brimm (1976) suggested that assistant principals take constructive measures to develop and expand the position into one that suits their aspirations. The measures in building an associate principalship included: compiling a list of all administrative tasks to be done in the school, identifying those tasks that the assistant principal is responsible for and those that he/she is competent or interested in, and presenting this

plan to the principal. Taking this action will indicate the assistant principal's willingness to accept increased administrative responsibility.

This suggestion was in stark contrast to what a number of other authors advised. Smerka, in proposing ways for the assistant principal to maintain solid relationships with people while he/she performs the role, said:

> You are a subordinate to the principal and the real purpose of your job is to alleviate problems and to make his or her job easier. . . . The main point about this relationship is to remember always keep the principal informed about what you are doing and why. Good communication is vital! (1980, p. 23).

Similarly, Koerner wrote: "The assistant principal is directly responsible to the principal. (He,she) is expected to maintain an effective working relationship with other administrators, teachers, [etc.]" (1980, p. 51).

Changes in Roles and Relationships

As advocates of the team approach to administration, Gross, Shapiro, and Meehan anticipated changes in the role of the assistant principal and his or her relationship with the principal:

> With the longer term tenure of many assistant principals in their jobs, and the decline of the 'stepping stone' idea concerning this administrative position, this is a good time for the principal and the assistant principal to take a fresh look at their jobs and at each other. It is hoped that there will be some re-thinking in regards to job descriptions and working relationships. (1980, p. 28)

Marshall also emphasized the need for change in the vice-principal's role and felt that these changes would be accomplished through increased training and teamwork: "The role will not change until there are shifts in the informal and formal training and selection of administrators - shifts toward valuing instructional leadership, close teamwork with teachers and colleagues" (1985, p. 134).

Certain obstacles, such as the inequitable distribution of duties, may impede the development of the vice-principalship. Hess explained:

> The needs and motivations of the principal can sometimes cause problems. As a junior administrator, the assistant principal is obligated to cooperate with, support, and be loyal to the principal. However, the principal may sometimes appropriate the more interesting and attractive administrative tasks and leave the remaining responsibilities to the assistant principal. (1985, pp. 95-96)

Joly described an emerging perception of the role of assistant principals and their relationship to principals: "The assistant principals have roles which require that the principal look upon them as creators, instigators, practical visionaries, . . . Nor should the principal assume the role of the creator and innovator and depend on the assistants merely as implementers" (1973, p. 17).

Potter agreed with such changes: "Assistant principals, no longer content to being 'bottom-line' administrators, want to become more involved in their schools' total educational programs. They want to participate in planning, evaluation, decision making,

and supervision" (1980, p. 9). He continued to explain how the relationship between principals and assistant principals can evolve over time:

> I shall never forget the day my principal called me into the office to discuss my new assignment as assistant principal. Since the position of assistant principal was new to both of us, he simply stated that my duties and responsibilities included anything and everything that he did not want to do.
>
> Fortunately, over the past 10 years of working together, considerable progress has been made in the areas of our duties and responsibilities. Since there are only two of us on the administrative team, we have learned through experience that sharing administrative responsibilities works best for us" (1980, p. 10).

Similarly, Childress postulated that the assistant principal "must be recognized as a member of the administrative team and as an individual who has certain competencies which will strengthen the school and its program" (1973, p. 6).

Rankin also supported a unified approach to administration, which would involve a redistribution of administrative responsibilities into two general areas. The author wrote:

> Within these guidelines, then, the principal is the final authority and has the right to rule on any actions or decisions that occur in his building. The assistant principal is free to make decisions concerning the operation and management of the school. These decisions should be made within the philosophical and educational decision-making of the principal. If doubt occurs, the assistant principal must refrain from decision making and confer with the principal. These actions call for a close relationship between the principal and his assistant and call for a conscientious effort by both to confer frequently. (1973, pp. 70-71)

In the course of his study, Austin noted two significant groups of assistant principals:

> One is the person who has sought and enjoys the assistant

> principalship as a career and who has some major professional responsibilities which in many another school are assigned to the principal. The second group are those who, as assistant principals, are privileged to participate on a team basis with an understanding principal, and who believe that the principal should have a full understanding of the details and dynamics of the school - an understanding from which the principal may, in most cases, be insulated. (p. 71)

In describing the role of the associate principal, Bates and Shank suggested a sharing of responsibilities with the principal: "Associate principals also participate in all major decisions affecting the secondary program. The relationship between the associate and the principal is synergistic; each is dependent upon the other" (1983, p. 112). They summarized this relatively new role and its advantages: "With clarification of administrative style, definition of responsibilities, and acceptance by other administrators, the associate principal is a more effective school leader, administrative team member, and community liaison than the usual assistant principal can be" (p. 111).

The Principal as Change Agent

Bordinger perceived the principal as a change agent, believing that the principal's perspective of the assistant principalship determined whether or not there was going to be a change in the image and responsibility of the vice-principal:

> If the principal views the position [of assistant principal] as essential to the functioning of a modern school, if he is interested in changing the position to one of positive experiences and satisfactions which will tend to make the role rewarding and permanent, if he is interested in enhancing the character of the position so that it is not just to be endured, if he believes in the team approach to

> administration, if he insists that principals need training in working with the developing job descriptions for assistant principals, . . . if he realizes that he needs to recognize and praise his contributions, then there is indeed an excellent chance for change. . . . The scope of his [the vice-principal's] influence will be determined largely by the principal's perception of the potential leadership of the assistant principal. (1973, pp. 12-13)

Valentine emphasized the principal's role and responsibility in assisting, training, and working with assistant principals: "Certainly, as principals, we have an obligation to those with whom we work to provide for, and promote, their growth as individuals and professionals" (1980, p. 43). Marshall supported this statement and suggested: "[W]e need to examine what sort of responsibility the principal feels for helping the assistant principal through the socialization process" (1985, p. 56).

In proposing that the assistant principal be considered an associate principal, Bates and Shank (1983) also outlined the role of the principal. They wrote: "The associate position provides an excellent training ground for the principalship. . . . The associate can help by sharing the administrative concerns of the principalship, while the principal serves, in part, as a mentor for the associate" (pp. 112-113). They continued: "The principal must be a confident, secure person who is willing to delegate and who feels comfortable with shared decision making" (p. 114).

The Importance of Communication

The success of the administrative team rests on the degree of communication and openness among the members. Rankin claimed:

"The accomplishments of these two [persons] will rest entirely on their ability to communicate freely with each other" (1980, p. 30). Sprague emphasized that members of the administrative team "must recognize that they are unique personalities with different strengths and weaknesses. Differences of opinion and dissatisfactions, which are certain to occur, must be discussed openly" (1973, p. 31).

Valentine identified team communication as an important managerial factor that promotes professional growth of assistant principals, but he recognized its benefits for both the principal and vice principal: "An auxiliary benefit of ongoing communication is the ability of one member to respond intelligently to a query about a problem another administrator is working to solve" (1980, p. 43).

Gross et al. claimed: "This openness of communication and willingness to invite consultation has made for a healthy climate and good high school morale" (1980, p. 27).

Interaction and Collaboration

Interaction between principal and assistant principal often involves collaboration. Lieberman describes the importance of working together:

> Contexts, needs, talents, and commitments differ, but one thing appears to be constant: schools cannot improve without people working together. . . . We need to understand not only the variety of collaborative activities and arrangements, but what people get from these relationships and what it takes to sustain them. (1986, p. 6)

Lieberman also provides guidelines as to how collective responsibility can improve schools. They include the following:

*Time for collaboration needs to be allotted.
*Skillful people working together enhance collaborative work.
*Large superordinate goals for collaboration become clearer after people have worked together.
*People often underestimate the amount of energy it takes to work with other people.
*Conflict in collaborative work is inevitable; it has the potential for productive learning.
*People can participate in collaborative work for different reasons, but they should include wanting to do things together.
*Products created by collaborating create an important sense of pride in collaborative work.
*Shared experiences over time build mutual trust, respect, risk-taking, and commitment. (1986, p. 7)

Cressman expressed the importance of interaction between school administrators:

> Taking some time to sit down with your principal and talk education is a must. For me, the time spent informally, away from the school, was a great opportunity to share philosophy, experiences, and information about the school. Out of such a meeting came shared thoughts about children and their learning, what a school should be, and many other views. The fact that these were shared went a long way to avoid mixed messages coming from either administrator in the school. This will also likely be the time when duties and responsibilities are discussed and assigned. (1988, p. 14)

Characteristics of Administrative Teams

Erickson and Gmelch outlined several basic characteristics of any effective management team:

> Team members must: 1. Be able to invest significant amounts of time. 2. Be able to work cooperatively rather than competitively toward common goals or purposes. 3. Have open and clear lines of communication. 4. Have trust in the integrity of their colleagues. 5. Encourage and work to understand the full explanation of minority opinions. 6. Have an acute skill in listening (versus hearing) to the opinions of others. (1977, p. 8)

Mortimore and Sammons reported factors and processes related to effective schools. One key factor was the involvement of the assistant principal in the administration of the school:

> Assistant principals can play a major role in the effectiveness of elementary schools. . . . Also important are the responsibilities undertaken by assistant principals. When the principal involves the assistant in policy decisions, students benefit. (1987, p. 7)

The information pertaining to the principal/vice principal relationship is based on limited data and further information is necessary to test and validate the claims and postulations.

Related Studies

Fenske (1963), by investigating the duties performed by principals and their administrative assistants, found that some areas of administrative duties are often shared between the principal and vice principal. These areas included management duties, clerical duties, staff personnel and pupil personnel duties, and extra-curricular duties. Fenske claimed: "Of the seven duty areas for the seven schools having vice-principals, thirty-one were shared, twelve were predominantly the responsibility of the principal, and six were predominantly the responsibility of the vice principal" (1963, p. 38). His data also indicated that discussions between the principal and the vice principal accounted for between zero and 17.5% of the total management time.

In a study of high school assistant principals in Georgia and their perceptions of principals' behavior as leaders, Dorminy &

Brown (1982) found that respondents who rated their principals high on consideration and initiatory structure tended to demonstrate high satisfaction. Demographic variables such as the vice-principal's years of administrative experience, level of education, and years of education had little effect on his/her job satisfaction.

In studying the perspectives of elementary school assistant principals, Millard concluded that "the optimum use of the assistant principal is as a member of an administrative team, where the assistant principal is given increasing authority and responsibility commensurate with his or her ability and experience" (1984, p. 195).

Based on her study, Millard discussed various implications for school districts and administrators regarding administrative teams. She felt that it may be worthwhile to "involve principals in the selection process to enhance compatability of the administrators within the school," to "provide direction for principals on the training of assistant principals," and to "stress administrative teams in school administration including provision for training on what constitutes an administrative team, and how to work as members of an administrative team" (1984, pp. 217-8). Furthermore, school administrators could "assess their own functioning as a team" and "set up scheduled administration meeting times to enhance communication and understanding" (p.218).

Hagan, in a study of assistant principals in urban centres of Saskatchewan, recognized the benefit in teaming administrators with complementary abilities and recommended: "Greater care should be taken in matching assistant principal and principal so the competencies of each enhance the total leadership process of an administrative team" (1984, p. 27).

Weindling and Earley, who conducted a questionnaire survey in England and Wales regarding the first years of headship, concluded that aspiring deputy heads should receive improved training. The following suggestions were made:

*Heads need to play a more important part in preparing deputies for headship.
*Heads should rotate deputies' job responsibilities.
*Deputies need to spend more time standing in for the head.
*Deputies should attend governors' meetings.
*Deputies should have greater opportunities to attend substantial management courses. (1987, p. 204)

They also stated that new heads should recognize the importance of their relationships with other members of the management team, particularly deputy heads, and made the following recommendations:

*Deputies must be fully involved in the planning and implementation of change.
*New heads have to learn to delegate. (1987, p. 206)

Conclusions

Relationships between principals and assistant principals are varied and are changing. I feel that the literature was lacking in the area of the principal/assistant principal relationship. Available information was limited and, oftentimes, was specific to particular groups in the United States. Further study is required

to gain a better understanding of administrative relationships within Alberta schools, the factors that influence them, and the effects of these relationships.

Conceptual Framework

The relationship between any two people may be very complicated and unique, and the literature confirmed that relationships between co-administrators can vary greatly. Gross et al. found that administrative relationships "range from a productive partnership between assistants and their principals to the feeling by assistants that all of the less desirable jobs have been literally dumped in their laps. . . . The time is ripe for a fresh look at the principal-assistant principal relationship" (1980, p. 26).

A review of the literature identified three dimensions to the relationship between a principal and an assistant principal (see Figure 1). By looking at the **structure** of the relationship, one can determine whether the relationship exemplifies a hierarchical or a team approach to administration. As part of that structure, the individual and shared **functions** of the administrators also reveal the nature of the relationship. The third dimension, the distribution of **responsibility and authority**, is also a significant component of the structure of the relationship.

Various qualities and factors may influence that relationship and characterize the interaction between the individuals involved. These qualities may be situational or personal; they may either

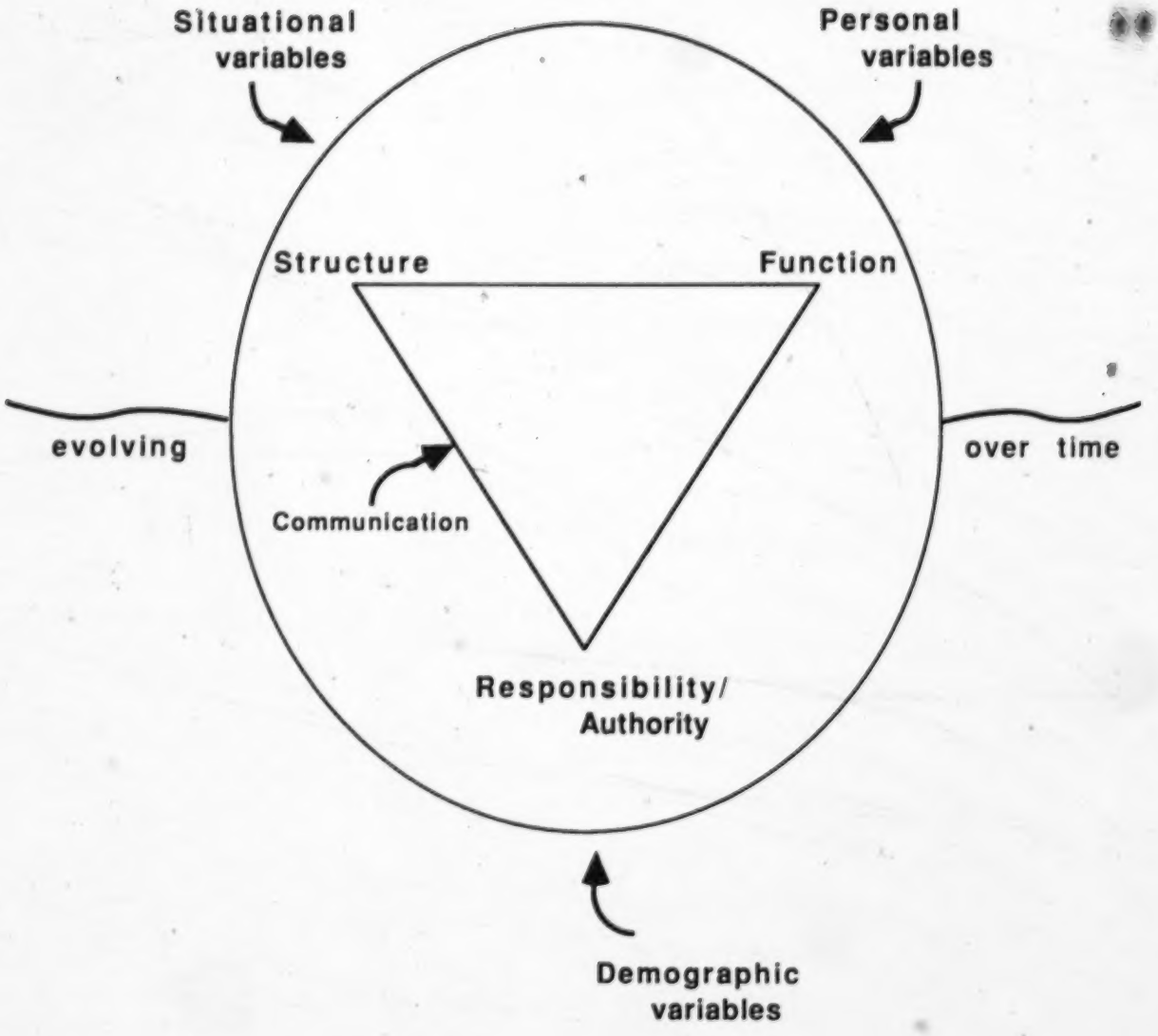

Figure 1. Factors influencing principal/assistant principal relationship.

promote or hinder a positive relationship. Demographic variables, such as administrative and teaching experience, may have an impact on the relationship. It may also be influenced by the personal characteristics, skills, and capabilities of the individuals involved. Although several factors arise in the literature, communication is identified as one of the most significant aspects of the relationship. This interaction is the medium through which a relationship is established and developed, maintained and nurtured.

The relationship may have changed since its inception and may continue to change over time and through experiences. It has potential and possibilities for growth and is not necessarily stagnant. It is important, then, not only to establish the foundations of the working relationship, but to study its growth.

The various facets, the influences, and the development of the relationship were studied within the elementary and elementary/junior high school context. To a certain extent, the literature review influenced the direction that the research took initially, and, later, I was able to compare the findings to the literature.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

In this study, the working relationship between principals and their assistant principals was investigated. This chapter provides an explanation of the methodology used to conduct this research as well as the rationale for selecting these measures.

Research Design

The true nature of a working relationship can be more clearly unveiled through examining the personal experiences of the administrators themselves. Therefore, I utilized qualitative methods, in the hopes of understanding how co-administrators in a school perceived their working relationship. Owens described the nature of qualitative research: "Qualitative inquiry seeks to understand human behavior and human experience from the actor's own frame of reference, not the frame of reference of the investigator" (1982, p. 7). It enables the researcher to understand and view reality as the participants do.

Indeed, Psathas succinctly described the information that I hoped to discover in investigating co-administrators and their relationship to one another: "what they are experiencing, how they interpret their experiences, and how they themselves structure the social world in which they live" (1973, p. 15).

The data were obtained through qualitative methods; data took the form of interview transcripts, participant observation notes,

and other documents. Characteristically, the data were context-bound and highly descriptive, in order to contribute to a fuller understanding of the relationships.

Pilot Study

Initially, a pilot study was conducted in which four vice-principals were interviewed regarding their role and their relationship with the principal. This allowed for the evaluation and refinement of major interview questions and allowed the emergent design of the qualitative study to develop. Much was learned through the pilot study, such as a sense of the time needed to gather the data and ensure its trustworthiness, and an idea of the effectiveness of the methodology and data collection techniques. Analysis of the data obtained in this preliminary study uncovered many aspects of the principal/assistant principal relationship that could be studied more thoroughly in the major study.

Selection of Participants

Six administrative teams were selected from within three school districts in the Edmonton area. Three of these teams were recommended by central office personnel, two were recommended by colleagues, and one team from the pilot study was involved. Four of the teams administered elementary schools, and two teams administered elementary/junior high schools. All six teams were recommended because of their positive working relationships.

Initially, the administrators were contacted by phone and were introduced to the nature of the study. After they expressed an interest in participating, arrangements were made to meet in person so that more information regarding the study could be given and ethical considerations could be reviewed with the administrators. When they confirmed a willingness to participate, a date was set for the actual interview. An interview guide was left with the respondents at this time so that they would know what I was interested in and would be able to give the questions some thought prior to the interview.

Data Collection

In-depth interviewing was the predominant data collection technique, although job descriptions were obtained when possible and some information was acquired through observation of the administrators immediately prior to and following each interview.

Although the interview questions remained the same, other questions emerged after the first few interviews. Tape-recording the interviews allowed for the analysis of all the data, including that which may otherwise have been missed or ignored.

Field notes were taken during each interview. In fact, analysis of the data began during its collection, a practice recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), Owens (1982), and Miles and Huberman (1984). This early analysis helped to set the direction of the study, determined further questioning, and

allowed me to pursue certain ideas and themes in succeeding interviews.

After more thorough analysis, transcripts were returned to the participants for verification and clarification of the meaning.

Data Analysis

Each taped interview was transcribed shortly after its completion, which allowed some analysis to take place before the next interview was conducted. The transcription of each tape was a key step in the analysis process because the interview was heard again in its entirety. Additional notes were taken during this step. These notes included questions to add to the interview guide for subsequent interviews, points in need of clarification, potential themes, reflections on the data, and implications for further research.

Once all the data were collected, transcribed onto computer disc, and printed, the most intense analysis sessions began. This time-consuming process "involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p. 145). Each of the thirteen interviews was reread carefully, and notes identifying potential categories and possible themes were written in the wide margins. This method of notation was employed in lieu of a formal system of coding. Significant pieces

of data were highlighted or underlined, and I identified effective quotes that could be used later in the reporting of the data.

Then, each interview was color coded. As was advised by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and LeCompte and Goetz (1982), the transcripts were then cut with scissors, and the pieces were categorized by topic and placed in separate piles. The physical manipulation of the data was very beneficial for it led to the development, evolution, and revision of categories.

In the end, related categories of data were placed inside labelled envelopes. I read through the contents of each envelope again to ensure that the data were properly categorized, and revisions were made. At the same time, notes were made on the outside of each envelope, summarizing the contents. Later, because of these efforts at analyzing and organizing the material, the process of reporting the data moved more smoothly.

Trustworthiness of Data

Specific methods were utilized to ensure that the data were trustworthy and valid. During data collection, I was able to pursue categories and themes that arose in previous interviews and in the pilot study. Subsequently, respondents were continually asked to comment on the significance and validity of specific aspects of the principal/assistant principal relationship. Also, as each interview transcript was studied and analyzed, any additional questions and points of clarification were written on a second copy of the transcript, which was then delivered to the

participant for verification and clarification of the data (see Appendices for correspondence that accompanied the transcript). This procedure was useful in checking for internal validity of the data.

Later, during analysis and after the first draft was completed, member checks were conducted with my thesis advisor, Margaret Haughey, who checked the data and my interpretations. Because both the principal and the assistant principal(s) in each school were asked similar interview questions, member checks were continually used during data collection, giving increased reliability to the data. As a means of enhancing the validity of the data, the research findings were shared and discussed frequently with colleagues and other administrators.

Ethical Considerations

I recognized and abided by certain ethical principles. Prior to giving consent, participants were fully informed of the purpose of the study and the methodology to be used. The subjects were granted the right to opt out of the study at any time and were informed of this freedom at the outset. Anonymity was guaranteed; no names were used in the study. All responses were treated with confidentiality. Participants were aware that only I and my advisor had access to the data, and strict care was given in keeping that information confidential.

Central office staff in one of the school systems were asked to nominate or recommend four administrative dyads which

exemplified positive working relationships. Only two dyads were chosen from that system. Superintendents were not informed as to which of the four teams had been chosen; therefore, anonymity was better assured for the two selected teams. Superintendents and the subjects themselves did not receive copies of this final document, but the latter were presented with a summary of the findings.

Certain measures were taken in order to conceal the identity of each respondent and to ensure that the study did not threaten or harm the relationship in each administrative dyad. Participants were informed that some of their responses would be directly quoted with the research findings. However, they were given the opportunity to verify the accuracy of their responses and to indicate, on a copy of the transcript, any remarks that they wanted me to disregard in the analysis. In presenting the findings, attempts were made at concealing even the gender of the respondent whenever possible.

Trust between the researcher and the respondents was essential for open and honest discussion of both positive and negative aspects of the administrative relationships in the study. By introducing myself and developing a rapport with the administrators prior to the interviews, by carefully describing the purpose of the study and the methodology to be used, and by sincerely discussing ethical considerations to be taken, I felt that I earned that trust.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analyses of the Data

The information presented below was generated from the responses to specific interview questions which were then synthesized into nine major categories for this report. In presenting the data, no attempt has been made to create any generalizations, as each principal/vice-principal relationship is unique and is dependent upon the context and the individuals involved.

Role Perceptions

Each administrator had perceptions of what his or her role entailed, both solely and in relation to a co-administrator's role. These perceptions influenced the nature of the working relationship between administrators and determined how they worked together in administering the school. As the purpose of this study was not to explore the role of principal or assistant principal, but to investigate how administrators work together and develop a positive working relationship, this topic was dealt with in a relatively general manner.

Principals' Perceptions of the Principalship

The principals acknowledged themselves as being the ultimate authority in the school, having responsibility for all that takes place within the school building. They described the principalship as a multi-task job that included responsibility for the programs, teacher evaluation, and student welfare. The

principal of a Catholic school identified the three facets of the role as being educational leader, religious leader, and manager.

Although many of the principals described their role as an educational leader, one in particular clarified instructional leadership:

> Instructional leadership means that you are knowledgeable and aware. . . . You have to know what the research is, what's current, so you have a good knowledge of everything that's happening and you can make wise decisions in terms of the programs that you're going to offer students. . . . You, yourself, in your own school, can be a leader in terms of presenting programs, presenting direction. You know what good learning is and you can work with your staffs to create that environment. I also see instructional leadership as being aware of what's going on in every classroom in your school and knowing that the curriculum is being taught. . . .
>
> It also involves a strong coaching aspect. If you're in the classroom and you're watching a lesson going on, you should have the ability to script-take and to study the lesson and then to sit with the teacher and teach the teacher, so to speak.

Instructional leadership included responsibility for staff development.

One administrator also viewed the role as "encourager, motivator. I consider myself a people person and so most of the things that I like to focus on--although you've got the paperwork and the mundane stuff--is interacting with people."

Several principals described their role as "a supporting role to the teachers' job in the classroom." The principal was a facilitator, one whose objective was to "make the job of the classroom teacher easier, to help them to do the job that they're supposed to be doing in the classroom," and, in so doing, "to give every child the best education possible."

Principal's Perceptions of the Vice-principalship

When asked how they perceived the role of the assistant principal in relation to their own, most principals described their vice-principal as a "supporter" and a "helper"; as one who assisted the principal in all of the areas previously outlined.

Some principals claimed that they did not see a difference in the roles except for the fact that the principal was ultimately responsible. One respondent, who described a team approach to administration, aptly explained this view:

> Essentially, the assistant principal's role is the same role as my role. The assistant principal is also an instructional leader, also has to keep up-to-date with what's happening in education, should be able to provide inservice for their staff, . . . and should be able to go into the classroom and evaluate a good lesson and coach the teacher. They should be able to do all the things that the principal does. I don't see the assistant principal's role as being lesser than the principal's role. I see it as an admin. team. I know we're three [administrators] in the school, and I almost see all of our roles as being the same. It's like we're three principals.

A similar view was expressed by a second principal:

> Ideally, it should be a team where the two really function very closely, ... where the assistant principal is as equally aware of all these dimensions and all the things that have to be done, and all the problems that then come up as the principal is aware.

While some principals viewed their assistants as "partners in the leadership process," others perceived the vice-principalship as a training ground for becoming a principal: "In my view, the assistant principalship is a stepping stone. It's a learning position where you learn how to administer a school more effectively and efficiently. You pick up skills from the

administrator that you are working with and for." The training aspect of the assistant principalship will be discussed more thoroughly towards the end of this section.

Assistant Principals' Perceptions of the Principalship

The common response in this area was that the principal is the leader of the school, having overall responsibility and, understandably, the final say. The principal's role was figuratively described by one vice-principal as "that of keeping the whole ball of wax together, overseeing everyone including myself," and by another as "being the umbrella over everything; someone who is steering the ship."

Another administrator labelled the principal as "the boss," and explained that she would not do anything of which he might not approve. She also added that, with all the principals she has worked with over the years, none of them has treated her as less than a significant member of the administrative team.

Another vice-principal with eight years of administrative experience viewed the principal as a mentor and "a teacher in a way, showing the ropes in many ways of administration. . . . He's an advisor on my own little projects that I'm in charge of, and he's a supporter of me in those projects." There again, the training aspect within the principal/assistant principal relationship was evident.

Assistant Principals' Perceptions of the Vice-Principalship

The majority of the assistant principals perceived their role as a supporting, assisting one. Another assistant principal viewed the role as one of a "helper," and, like the other respondents, was open to accepting duties delegated by the principal.

The assistant principalship was viewed by several administrators as a team position, due to the support and dialogue that was evident between them. One vice-principal commented that, rather than viewing each other as the principal and the assistant principal, they viewed themselves as "the administrators of the school." They perceived a collegial relationship rather than a hierarchical structure in their administration.

One administrator commented that he saw himself as "a partner, as a member of a group of administrators. I see my role as being no different than the principal's role. . . . We work as a team. If there's a job to be done, we do it."

Another respondent pointed out the distinguishing factor between the two: "Although you're perceived as part of the administration team by the staff, you have to be aware that there's a distinction between what a principal does and what an assistant principal does. The principal is the ultimate authority in the school."

One assistant principal felt that his administrative role was unique because of the principal. The principal allowed the

assistants to accept equal responsibility in all areas and to "bear the weight equally." Therefore, the vice-principal exclaimed, "My role is so directly based on and connected to what she [the principal] does. . . . [M]y role is reflected in her role." This individual shared a vision with his principal, and he commented that, as a result, "my role is to do whatever is necessary to direct the staff in pursuit of that vision."

The role of the vice-principal was also viewed in some cases as "a liaison between the teachers and the principal." This was due, in part, to the nature of assigned duties. Many assistants were involved with ordering of materials, textbook rental, and other curriculum-related tasks, which allowed contact with staff.

Another respondent recognized himself as "an administrator in training." In his view, a vice-principal was gaining leadership experience, learning how a school operates, and developing administrative skills.

The majority of the respondents perceived the assistant principalship as a stepping stone to the principalship rather than a career in itself. One interviewee, with fifteen years of administrative experience, seven of those years as a vice-principal, speculated, "I think most people would probably see it as a stepping stone to a principalship. There are very few people, I think, in our system that are career vice-principals."

Two of the assistant principals in the study viewed the position as a career. One respondent with over twenty years of

teaching experience, the majority as a vice-principal, enjoyed teaching and the time in the classroom that the position allowed.

Another administrator was completing a seventh year as vice-principal at the same school. Because of the team approach with his principal, he was highly satisfied with the assistant principalship and viewed the position as a career. He explained:

> I feel I have a very unique relationship with a principal, and I'm getting all the experiences of a principalship here. I don't feel that I have to be "top dog." . . . If I was in a position where I was really handcuffed and disagreed with some of the things or wasn't having any input, I might want to be a principal so that I could have an input and try my hand at some of these things. But I'm getting that experience now.

With twelve years' experience as an assistant principal, another respondent initially found the vice-principalship to be an opportunity to learn what administration involved. After trying unsuccessfully to acquire a principalship, she was re-evaluating her views on the position.

Training of Assistant Principals

Both principals and assistant principals perceived the assistant principalship as a training ground. One administrator recommended that new assistant principals be led along slowly and be given specific duties so that they feel part of the administration. The task areas should increase and broaden with time.

Another principal explained that he assigns duties, provides help, and then determines how well the assistant can handle them. He recommended: "Give them the responsibility and then, of

course, give them the support to see that it's done successfully. If I'm asking my assistant principals to do these things, I must give them adequate time to do them as well." The vice-principal's background and administrative experience were taken into account before delegating these duties. One respondent explained, "As far as giving the assistant more or less responsibility, [that] would depend on the assistant and the stage that they are at in their development."

Upon reflecting on her own experiences as an assistant, one principal felt that, unless the vice-principal is exposed to all the task areas and is involved in major decision-making, the position is not truly a training ground. She added, "I think it should be a professional team working together, and then it does become a good training ground." Similarly, another principal remarked, "My approach has been to try to make it as real and practical and as much a partnership as possible," rather than delegating only textbook rental and other such "joe-jobs" to the assistant principal.

Principals can play an important role in helping their assistants broaden their horizons, as this principal explained; "I would accommodate their wishes as well as the opportunity for them to delve into the administration area so they feel comfortable when they'd have to take it on themselves." As a principal and now an assistant principal, one respondent remarked:

> I would try to challenge them, to give them something a little more than they've done in the past, something a little

> different than they've done in the past, something that their interest is in in becoming a principal, something that's going to open up all avenues of awareness for them.

Even though her district office has never identified training of the vice-principal as one of her responsibilities, one principal felt that the training aspect of the relationship is necessary if the two administrators are going to work as a team. Another respondent remembered the words of an administrator he had once worked with: "I have confidence in you and I see that you will be a principal, and I'm going to groom you for the principalship. You will share everything we do." There again, the principal seemed to recognize the potential and the readiness of the assistant and, in a sense, supervised the training program.

One aspect of this training process is modelling. The principal modelled administrative behavior and set an example: "If I'm really open about things, then probably he would be more open the next time." In many cases it involves sharing, with the assistant principal, the procedure for performing certain tasks, such as managing the budget. By observing the other administrators, the assistant can "internalize where the priorities are." Because each administrator is an individual with strengths and unique experiences, they learn from each other.

Mentoring by principals can be another form of training. Through discussions and dialogue, a principal can help the assistant discover another alternative to handling a situation. One administrator related a situation in which he was helping his

assistant solve a discipline problem. Rather than just advising the assistant principal, he discussed the matter and the various options until the vice-principal recognized a better decision.

The assistant principal learns from a variety of people and can receive guidance from various resource people. The principal is not necessarily the trainer or the only one, as one assistant principal explained: "Although that person [the principal] helps and can give you their experiences, a lot of it is also just having done it or thinking through it. . . . You learn from many people, not just the principal."

One assistant principal had tried to gain experience in a variety of task areas and had taken the initiative to help herself in training. She had sought opportunities to work in new areas. Indeed, several of the vice-principals that were interviewed mentioned the initiative they had taken in acquiring new duties and greater responsibility.

One principal, who had very little shared administration time with the vice-principal, found it difficult to actively train the assistant. Another commented that it was not easy to teach another person certain administrative skills and that certain skills are learned just by doing them. This on-the-job training was made easier if the assistants had some administration courses in their background: "There's a lot of valuable energy taken up in kinds of things, some of which could be handled before they take the job on." Still, one vice-principal, who received very

little guidance from the principal, felt that "the coaching would make it much easier."

The assistant principalship can be enhanced as a training program through open communication between administrators, by sharing duties and decision-making, and by keeping the assistant principal informed and involved. It is an ongoing training process and a principal must provide opportunities for the assistant and encourage the learning: "You've got to take responsibility for it. You've got to learn. Sometimes, like chairing a staff meeting, and not only just when I'm away, but when I'm there."

For the position to truly be a training ground, the assistant principal must be given the responsibility and the freedom to make decisions and to learn from one's mistakes: "I've never really been in a position where my assistants have made decisions that were really 'contraire.' There were some that were 'touch and go' but that's part of the learning process."

When asked about his role in training the vice-principal, one administrator summarized, "I think it's a daily experience--communication, sharing, assigning, setting an example, willingness to give and take, and being open."

Growth of the Relationship

Each of the administrative teams perceived changes in their relationship. As time passed, the working relationship evolved and developed. It grew to be stronger and closer. In this

segment, I have studied the relationships in their early stages, the ways in which the relationships have changed, and, finally, the areas in which the respondents felt the relationships would continue to grow.

The Early Relationship

Most co-administrators did not know each other before coming to work together. As a result, there was a lot to be learned about one another and how to best work together. Because each relationship grew within a specific context and the individuals in each relationship brought with them a different background and a personal repertoire of teaching and administrative experiences, the beginning of each relationship was unique.

Getting to know each other. Initially, the administrators spent a great deal of time talking with one another, discussing various topics of school administration, and sharing educational philosophies and views. One respondent said, "It was a getting-an-awareness time, when I was getting acquainted with [the assistant] and her philosophy of education. It was a time of asking questions about various things educationally."

It was also a time of "getting to know one another--the philosophies of each other, getting to realize that they weren't that far apart." The administrators had to develop a foundation for their working relationship. This basis was discovered after "a lot of planning and discussing. . . . Both of us were new to the school and we were both finding our way."

One vice-principal reported that, early in their relationship, the principal

> shared his views on the role of the assistant and the principal, and how he hoped that we could get along. . . . There really wasn't anything to resolve. He said the same thing as I had hoped for, that he was going to give me experience in decision-making and share the administration with me, rather than just delegate a few things.

The administrators spoke about meeting with one another prior to school beginning so they could get to know each other, discuss significant issues, and plan for the school year. One assistant principal described the nature of these first meetings: "We got together a few times before school ever started, just talking about the kinds of things that you expect kids to do, the kinds of things you expect to happen in a school, what your philosophy of education is."

Part of this time was spent getting acquainted with one another while the other segment of time was devoted to getting organized for the school year, and that included deciding on the allocation of duties: "At that time, we looked at the list of duties for the assistant principal and [I] got her response to that and her input."

There can be certain expectations and notions when entering a new working relationship, as one respondent discussed:

> I suppose you come in with some preconceived ideas. . . . I knew from other people that [the assistant] was a very fine teacher, a very dependable person. I came in with a very good sense that we would have no problems, that we would be able to work together.

Starting cautiously. During the early stages of the working relationship, the administrators were careful in how they completed tasks and made decisions: "We felt our way along very carefully because we were still in the initial stages of learning about each other." Another respondent commented, "You have to be careful when you start out working with somebody, to find out what to do and how to do it."

One assistant principal with eight years of administrative experience, described how he listened more than he spoke when his co-administrator first arrived at the school. He chose to participate in this manner until he knew the principal better:

> I didn't know his style of leadership. I didn't know a lot of the ideas that he had, where he was going, his views on so many things. And I wanted to learn, so I did a lot of listening. . . . I think it's more of a listening and getting to know each other. I didn't try to sway him on things. It's mostly developing a relationship.

This caution was particularly evident in the relationship if one of the administrators was new to a school. It was important for the newcomer to learn about what was already in place at the school and how administrative tasks had been handled in the past. Becoming familiar with procedures and traditions already in place was necessary for a smooth beginning to a working relationship, and changes in administration could evolve as the relationship grew and as new problems and situations arose. One experienced principal reflected on his arrival in a new school: "I was an outsider, from outside the district, an unknown quantity. We both

walked on soft toes for the first while, just as we felt each other out and learned about each other."

Newcomers were often hesitant to instigate many changes and, instead, maintained the status quo. One principal, a newcomer at a school where the vice-~~principal~~ had worked for several years, explained the need for approaching change cautiously:

> It was taking the time to understand, instead of jumping in with both feet and changing something only to find out that either the change is less effective than what was there or that the timing was inappropriate and all you've done is alienate people because they haven't understood why these changes and alterations were necessary.

The same individual explained that the distribution of administrative duties remained unchanged after his arrival:

> We really didn't sit down and clarify specifics at that point. I basically indicated to [the assistant] that unless she was uncomfortable with some of the responsibilities she had carried previous to my arrival, she could continue to hold responsibility for those areas that she had held responsibility for, and I would pick up the responsibilities that my predecessor had. As we got to know each other and got the feel for how we worked together and what the needs of the school were, we would revise those.

It wasn't until they had worked together for one year that the two administrators wrote job descriptions.

One assistant principal reported that, early in the relationship, the two administrators had different views on change and that it was necessary for them to share their perspectives, gain an understanding of one another, and then reach an agreement.

Checking with one another. As the individuals in each relationship began to work together, it was necessary to check with one another as to mutually acceptable ways of performing

certain tasks. It is a time of coming to know how the other individual feels about and responds to different situations as well as how specific concerns and issues have been addressed in the past.

One principal commented that the vice-principal checked with her often in the beginning because he wasn't sure how the administrative team handled some situations. The need for checking had lessened "because once you know you're all on track, you don't have to check as much."

Another administrator described the need to check with the vice-principal in the early months of working together:

> [The assistant] has been in the school for seven years. The relationship initially took that into consideration, recognized that she had the background information that was going to be critical for me in terms of making right decisions and directing things. She knew the things that had gone on, knew the staff, their idiosyncrasies, where their expertise lay. Initially, I basically took a lot of advice.

The administrators can not discuss all administrative matters when they first begin working together. Therefore, checking with one another and deciding on a way of handling situations was done as situations arose: "You can't go over everything that will crop up during the year. I think you have to work your way through them as they come up."

For two administrators, who had moved into the school in the same year, there was no one to inform them of established procedures. The assistant principal said, "We were discovering those things for ourselves. That probably led to a lot more

discussion. We were in it together and had to more or less lean on each other to get through that first year."

Proving oneself. In one situation, the principal had moved to the school, while the vice-principal had had several years of experience there. The principal described a certain amount of uneasiness in being new to the staff and feeling the need to prove himself as an effective administrator with contributions to make to the school:

> Whether it's a parent phoning in with a question or a teacher wondering how this works, to recognize that I didn't know the answers but [the assistant] did is somewhat disquieting and causes a certain amount of anxiety, because you want to, as quickly as possible, demonstrate your competency and that you do have some expertise. . . . to establish their trust and confidence. As a result, that meant longer hours, taking that extra amount of time to talk with people, and trying to develop the kind of working relationship that is necessary if you're going to effectively work together.

Overcoming obstacles. Due to factors out of their control, one administrative team initially experienced some frustration in their relationship. The assistant principal accounted for this frustration as being due to her own ill-health at the time, her newness to the school, and the absence of a secretary for two months. As a result, she felt that she lacked direction: "I felt that I was floundering." Still, she viewed the experience as a beneficial one because "I got to know a lot of things I otherwise would not have learned."

Turning points in the relationship. It requires time and energy and a number of other ingredients for an administrative

team to become a working unit. Sometimes one incident can cause a dramatic change in a relationship.

The principal in one administrative team reflected on the early relationship with her vice-principal. Because it was her first principalship, she "wasn't sure how the role [of the assistant principal] should develop or if he should have certain things to do. We were struggling together." The two of them had been working for several months but neither had an understanding of the other. They had different leadership approaches and styles. One was a risk-taker; the other was more cautious. The two administrators did not share a common vision for the school.

Midway through that first year, the principal approached the assistant principal with her concerns. The assistant remembered the principal's words:

> She said, "I'm doing a lot of this philosophy work and I'm not sensing a lot of support from you. This is what I need from you. I need you to come with me. I need you to get on board and support me on my ideas. I need you to share them, and we have to talk about it and let each other know what our visions are."

Both administrators identified this meeting as a "turning point" in their working relationship. After that, they met every day after school and worked more closely and openly with each other.

Such a turning point was also experienced by a second administrative team. After three months of working together, the principal became ill and was unable to continue his duties. The assistant principal replaced him for the remainder of the year, during which time the principal, who was new to the school, was

able to visit occasionally to meet and interact with students and staff. The assistant principal described the outcome:

> When [the principal] had that time to reflect and think and find out more about the school, he got to know the school a lot better. We had time then to make some decisions, and he got to look at some things about how they were happening and then make some decisions about what he thought should be the same and what he thought should be different. That process, although it was unique to us, was a turning point.

Change and Growth in the Relationship

The administrators in the study were able to identify changes that took place in their relationship and in how they work together. One participant felt that his relationship with his principal has grown in the way that any relationship grows: "The main points of any relationship are trust, confidence, friendship, and support. They have grown over the years in our administrative relationship as well."

Better knowledge of each other. As the working relationships developed, the individuals learned more about each other, became more aware of the other's strengths and weaknesses, and learned to accept the other person as he or she was. After a period of working together, each administrator gained an understanding of the other person and how he or she worked, thought, and felt. One participant replied, "I know now, for instance in discipline, how [the principal] is going to react, whereas initially I didn't."

With this familiarity comes greater appreciation of each other's abilities and strengths, although one principal cautioned: "Sometimes you take each other for granted. . . . You can get into

a pattern where you work together so long that you might not stop and think about how much you value or appreciate the person."

One administrator felt that, because they know each other better, they take less time to meet with each other:

> [The relationship] has changed simply because I think we each can take for granted the fact that we don't need to see each other because we know where we're coming from or we know what the decision may be and just go on.

Greater trust and confidence. Many of the respondents discussed the increased confidence in oneself and in one another as the relationship developed--a confidence that is part of the trust relationship that forms, a confidence that is also fostered by support for one another. As a result of her principal's support, one vice-principal felt, "We've learned to trust each other, which is important. I don't feel that, if I made a mistake, [he] would counteract it."

As a result of the confidence that they have in each other, members of one administrative team had grown in their risk-taking ability: "Because she believes in me, and I definitely believe in her, we're more prone to take risks, because we know someone's behind us."

Another principal, who acknowledged his assistant principal's strengths, including her ability to analyze and deal with problems effectively, commented, "There's more trust between us. I think I can sit and talk to her about any issue or item." The faith that this individual had in his assistant grew from his recognition of and appreciation for her abilities. Similarly, by taking summer

courses together in areas that could be used in the school's professional development program, two administrators grew to know each other's strengths and weaknesses, and, as one subject added, "That helped us gain confidence in each other."

After developing a trust relationship, one principal felt that he could more confidently allocate responsibilities to the vice-principal:

> The confidence that we've gotten for each other has been a very positive, growing factor. It's easy to say, "You have the responsibility for these areas. I'm going to let go and you do it." But until you develop the confidence that goes along with giving over that responsibility, for the principal there continues to be that concern that if [the assistant] messes it up, ultimately it reflects on me and my leadership.

In discussing the growth in her working relationship, one individual stated, "We really support one another, and we encourage each other, and we build confidence in each other. That's a pretty strong bond that comes in a working relationship."

As confidence builds, the administrators also feel more comfortable in approaching and dialoguing with each other and gain confidence in their ability to work as a team:

> As we become more familiar, I think there is that confidence, that awareness, that each of us has particular areas that we're good at, and we feel comfortable. . . . I think we recognize that, while our strengths are perhaps very different, our objectives are very similar, and [that] if we worked together and pooled our strengths, we could be a very effective administrative team.

One principal, who commented on the fact that he doesn't worry when he is out of school for three days and his assistant is in charge, felt that the confidence has always been there in the

relationship, but he added, "That confidence is stronger now in the sense that it's confirmed."

Improved communication. Communication is one medium through which individuals come to know one another and instill a sense of trust. Communication between the administrators improved as they became more confident and more aware of each other. This change was explained by one principal: "The more comfortable you become with each other, the more comfortable we are asking questions, sharing information."

The purpose for communication also changes as the relationship develops: "The communication flow, the informational aspect of it, has increased and the need for getting approval has diminished. The respect for each other's competencies has resulted in not seeking approval but seeking the other person's thoughts."

After working together for a few months and learning more about each other, it was not necessary to check with the other administrator(s) as often. A second administrator, whose assistant had a great deal of experience but was new to the school, acknowledged less need for checking with one another as she and her assistant principal learned how each other operated.

Decision-making became easier as the relationships grew: "Initially, we may argue it out, toss it around, or do all of those things. But now, because we all know how each person operates and how we think, we make our decisions more quickly,"

Still, this individual emphasized the importance of communication in order for the relationship to grow strong and for the administrators to work as a team.

One experienced assistant principal "didn't propose too many new things" when he first began working with a new principal. With more confidence and comfort, he says, "I have become a little more bold and a little more outspoken now that I know him." As a result, he contributes more in decision making.

Growing together. In many ways, the administrators grew together, learning from each other and developing common philosophies. Administrative teams that had worked together for some time tended to have more shared background, more shared experiences. Some of the respondents testified that, consequently, their perceptions were different than when they were new to the situation. One participant expounded, "I was, prior to meeting [the principal], perceiving my role more as a manager than as an instructional leader, but, having had this experience, I feel much more an instructional leader than a manager."

For some administrative teams, working together for a time allowed them to develop and strengthen a vision for the school: "It became quite evident as we began to work together that we did have a clear vision. We began to articulate it better as time went on, and it's become very strong now."

One vice-principal stated that, every year, he and his co-administrators discuss their values and how they plan to

develop and teach them within the school: "This continuous rehashing and dialogue of values has really strengthened them and honed them down to where we really think we know where we stand."

The administrators learned from each other. For example, one principal said, "I don't think the relationship has stood still. There are lots of things that I have grown in knowledge of." This growth was the result of his vice-principal's expertise in certain areas. Another principal recognized much growth and change in the working relationship because she modelled her administrative skills and behavior for her vice-principal. To illustrate, she explained, "If I'm really open about things, then probably he would be more open. If I shared a vulnerability, then he won't be so reluctant to share his."

Increased responsibility. Two of the principals noted that their assistants sought and accepted more duties as the relationship developed. One principal commented that in "the first year, when [the assistants] haven't had those responsibilities before, you have to really sit down with them and almost walk them through." However, after that initial period of uncertainty, the assistant principal became more involved in administrative tasks.

According to one respondent, a vice-principal, the relationship had grown because he felt like a valued member of the administrative team: "My advice has been asked for and acted upon."

Extent of growth in the relationship. The respondents reported varied degrees of growth in their working relationships. Two individuals felt that the relationship had not changed a great deal. In contrast, members of another administrative team constantly discussed and evaluated their instructional leadership and then consciously tried to improve it. Describing the ongoing growth in their leadership, the principal stated, "It's just like teaching--you get better every year. You refine and polish every year as you go along. We continue to grow even though we've been working together for a long time."

The amount of growth that occurred in the relationships studied seemed to depend upon a number of factors. Some administrators were nearing the end of their second year together, while another team had worked together for seven years. The amount of growth was also determined by the individuals in each relationship and the circumstances under which they worked. Numerous factors that contribute to growth in the principal/assistant principal relationship will be discussed in depth later in this chapter.

One principal succinctly addressed many of the types of growth that were mentioned by the participants in the study:

> As time has elapsed and both of us have been able to see the other in operation and to develop a confidence in each other's strengths and an understanding for each other's strengths and weaknesses, I think we both feel much easier about accepting courses of action that the other chooses. It's that familiarity that happens. And as time passes, if we remain working together, that's going to continue to improve.

Ways In Which the Relationship Could Continue to Grow

In regard to the principal/assistant principal relationship, many of the administrators acknowledged room for growth. Responses varied according to the individuals within each team, their perceptions of the relationship at present, and the extent to which they hoped it would grow. Members of the same administrative team did not always agree on the need, extent, or nature of this growth.

Room for improvement. Although they felt comfortable with their relationship at present, some administrators recognized a desire to work more closely as a team. One principal stated philosophically, "There's never a time when we stop growing. We can always grow, and I think there's always room for us to grow. It's almost as if we stop growing when we're dead. It's lifelong learning."

For another respondent, the relationship seemed to be stable, and he did not see a need for changes in his workload or in how they performed administrative tasks. In a similar vein, a second administrator commented, "We work well together, and that's it. I don't know whether you can work any better together."

According to one assistant principal, the greatest amount of growth occurred in her first year as an administrator. There was much personal growth as a result of first-year experiences and because the principal gave her a lot of responsibility. Another administrator felt that, after seven years of working together,

she and her vice-principal were still developing each other's strengths. However, she added, "We're probably not growing at the same rate as we did in the beginning."

Nature of desired or anticipated growth. Specific areas were identified by some participants as areas in which the relationship could continue to grow. Communication was mentioned by several administrators as one such area. One principal wanted to work towards "a further increase in discussing with one another the issues and dealing with them together." In the hopes of building a closer administrative team, another principal planned to involve the vice-principal more directly in decision-making.

Planning was identified twice as an area that the team could work on, firstly, in terms of long range planning as an ongoing process during which the administrators would address ways of varying the program and better meeting the needs of the students. A second principal outlined a different form of planning and the reasons for it:

> Both of us are undergoing personal evaluations this year. As we've talked about and thought about that process and are working through it, it's opened the door to discussion about potential weaknesses that both of us have that might have been difficult to broach had the evaluation not been going. I think what the future holds is some specific concrete planning on both of our parts to deal with those areas that are identified as areas for stretching and for growing.

One respondent thought that the relationship would continue to grow as long as they continued to pursue professional development and encouraged each other to do so. By keeping

abreast with recent research in education, each individual would have more to offer the administrative relationship.

For one administrator, the growth would result from "the understanding that we're professionals and that we have responsibility to each other," and would be stimulated "more by example than anything." Another vice-principal anticipated growth because his principal was open, sought counsel from him, and set challenges for him.

After two years of working together, one respondent remarked that her relationship with the principal had "just begun." Another individual expressed the desire to continue working with his present co-administrator for several more years, while one vice-principal predicted that, if either he or his principal was to move to another school, they would maintain the relationship and continue to share with and learn from each other.

To conclude his response, one principal stated, "Hopefully, we'll be able to help each other grow."

Duties and Responsibilities

The administrators discussed, in general, the distribution of duties and the manner in which these duties were performed. Some duties were shared by all members of the administrative team; some specific tasks were handled by individuals. The allocation of duties was influenced by a variety of factors, including the amount of administration time.

Allocation of Duties

The process of allocating duties. The majority of administrative teams had met prior to school commencement to discuss duties and responsibilities. It was then that they decided on the areas that each would be responsible for as well as the areas where the responsibility would be shared.

In one case, the principal, who was new to the school, proposed specific duties for the vice-principal to take and then asked him to react. The vice-principal's duties were basically the same as those he performed with the previous administrator. The assistant found the balanced assignment to be acceptable, because it was good preparation for the principalship. The principal wrote a formal list of duties for the assistant because "a person will more likely achieve what he's asked to do if he knows what he's supposed to achieve."

The process of distributing the work was similar in another school and was described by the principal: "When [the assistant] first came here, we sat down and looked at the overall picture, and between the two of us decided what duties she would do." Here again, the vice-principal inherited a number of tasks that her predecessor had handled.

For another administrative team, the duties were never formally allocated or discussed: "It sort of evolved as we went along. As we saw that things had to be done, [the vice-principal] would say, 'Well, I'll look after that'." In like manner, another

principal explained that the allocation of duties was not always predetermined: "Some things are delegated throughout the year. We've never really sat down at the beginning of the year and said, 'You do this and I'll do that.' As a year goes, it evolves." As in many cases, several small administrative tasks arose from the mail and were handled by individuals on the team.

Responsibility was sometimes divided according to grades. For example, in one school, the assistant principal took responsibility for the lower elementary grades while the principal was in charge of the upper elementary. Similarly, the principal in a large elementary/junior high school was responsible for students and program in grades one to five; grades six to nine were managed by the vice-principal, who explained,

> This is a very busy school, and it is easier if we can divide it up a bit, so that we're not both trying to do everything. . . . We tried to make sure that it balanced, that we were doing things that we were interested in. It's just decided through mutual discussion.

The principals, having the ultimate responsibility and the right to delegate, exercised their authority in the process of allocating duties. However, in one school, the principal made the decision that administrative duties were to be shared. The vice-principal stated, "It was part of her vision that we share it, that we do it together. . . . I've never been assigned duties, but there are things that I've picked up and decided that I'm going to do."

Criteria affecting the allocation of duties. Various factors influenced the distribution of duties amongst the members of the administrative teams. Some criteria had a greater impact in some cases than others.

The amount of administrative time for the vice-principal was often a deciding factor as to the workload: "The nature of the tasks that you ask an assistant principal to do sometimes have to be more finite, more concrete, because they have much less admin. time than I do." In most situations, the vice-principal taught for a greater percentage of the time than the principal and, therefore, was unable to take on as heavy an administrative workload. One principal would have liked his assistant to become involved in teacher evaluation but was concerned about the lack of time that the vice-principal had. He explained, "I want to be careful that I don't overload him." On the other hand, one principal felt that, because the vice-principal seemed to lack the time, she acquired those duties and then ended up with a large load.

In one school where, due to its small size, administration time was scarce, each teacher was asked to take responsibility for a job concerning the whole school, for example, track and field or audiovisual. By allocating these duties to the teaching staff, the administrators negotiated a more manageable workload for themselves.

Expertise and one's strengths and weaknesses were considered important in deciding on who did what: "I'm more secondary in my background and training, and [the principal] is more elementary in his background and training, so we divided up the school so that I have the junior high section and he has the elementary section." Likewise, one vice-principal was responsible for the supervision of the early childhood program in the school and the evaluation of teachers at that level. She had the expertise and felt more comfortable working in that area. Her principal recognized his own weakness in working in division one and remarked, "That was just a natural division of labor."

Interests and talents were also taken into account: "If somebody was gifted in the area of organization, they got to do the timetabling." One vice-principal had a natural ability with public relations and an interest in computers. Consequently, she was involved in those areas. Considering the strengths and interests of the individuals on her team, one principal distributed the mail and delegated minor tasks accordingly. Some members of the administrative teams even stated, early in the school year, their preferences for certain duties.

Two principals also considered the capabilities and wishes of their assistant principals:

> My reason for giving the assistant principal the assignments that I give him or her is based on what I believe they can handle and what they wish to handle. I'm not going to assign them a task that they feel they can't handle or don't want.

In another case, the principal assigned certain duties, such as the budget, to the vice-principal, who was able to give these assignments the time they deserved. The same individual remarked on the power of tradition, "Textbook rental is probably a traditional thing in our school system for assistant principals to look after."

In allocating duties, one team considered equity and fairness as well:

> We tried to take everything we see as the administration of the school, looked at our own strengths and weaknesses or interests, and then assigned those primary responsibilities as equitably as we could, not only the fun things but the mundane, unenjoyable things as well.

Sometimes, it was a matter of efficiency. One principal took care of all the paperwork because she had developped an efficient system. In another school, the administrators had divvied up duties because they could then accomplish the tasks more quickly.

Specific Duties

As a result of the allocation of duties at the beginning of the school year, some of the administrators had specific responsibilities. Often they were the result of uncorresponding and unequal administration times. One individual explained, "There are a lot of things that we do individually. I have more time for administration--almost twice the time that she has--and because of that, I have time to do more things."

One individual on each team tended to assume primary responsibility for such administrative tasks as budget and

staffing. The latter task was usually handled by the principal because the vice-principal wasn't always available for interviews. However, vice-principals were often consulted on such matters and enjoyed some input in those areas. One assistant principal, whose principal took charge of the budget, commented, "For now, I'm satisfied. I know what's happening or what went on, and I've got all the facts and figures. That's probably one area where he prefers me to be more a sharer and advisor than a decision-maker." The principal, in this case, felt that the assistant was not ready to handle the task and would not feel comfortable doing it.

Many of the administrators, particularly the vice-principals, were able to list their specific duties. For instance, in one school, where shared administration time was lacking, the vice-principal had a very separate role from the principal:

> A lot of my duties are separate from hers. For example, I'm in charge of supervision, setting up the schedules. [I'm the] lunch hour supervisor. I'm in charge of ordering materials. I'm in charge of budget and keeping that on track. I'm in charge of advertising. I evaluate the aides.

It was also clear that, although many of these duties were allocated or delegated, these individuals also acquired certain responsibilities on their own initiative.

The administrators in one school had drawn up job descriptions outlining specific areas of primary, but not sole, responsibility: "It doesn't make a whole lot of sense to have two people trying to do everything, so we do have very specific areas of primary responsibility with the understanding that either of us

can overlap into the other's area if circumstances so dictate." Each individual was responsible for the discipline, program, and special events at a particular grade level. However, because they were familiar with each other's areas of responsibility, they were also able to handle any problems that arose when the other individual was absent.

Several of the administrators mentioned that, despite the seemingly clear-cut division of labor, they were aware of what the other was doing in terms of those specific duties and, as one respondent explained, conferred with and helped each other when needed. The following example was shared: "On Friday, [the vice-principal] had a situation with some junior high students that she just felt was significant enough that she wanted my involvement. So she waited until I got back to the office, and we dealt with it jointly."

Shared Duties

Although each administrator on a team had specific duties, they did not work independently in all areas. They performed various tasks together and shared the responsibility for those tasks.

Duties were not shared in the same way or to the same degree in all the situations studied. In one school, the leadership style and the interaction between the administrators exemplified a team approach. The three administrators were not segregated by specific areas of responsibility or grade levels; instead, there

was joint responsibility: "We're all responsible for the total staff, and we're all responsible for the total student body." There wasn't a definite job description for each administrator. Many of the tasks were dealt with by whoever was at the scene first, had the time, or recognized the need.

"I would say that we share them all," declared another vice-principal. With her principal, she played an equal part in staffing, fully participating in the planning and conducting of the interviews and working together "on any position we've filled in the school." On the other hand, she had a lesser role in budgeting, only because she wasn't interested in that area.

Staffing in another school was the principal's primary responsibility, and he ultimately made the decision, but the vice-principal gave input and was involved in the process:

> [The principal] actually does most of the hiring and firing, but we work together on that. He asks my input, or I sit in on the interviews, or I've gone through the resumes and picked out the four top ones to see if they compare with his four top ones. That's something we work together on.

In two of the six schools, staffing was a completely shared responsibility, with the principal and the assistant(s) contributing equally to the process. In all other cases, the principal made the final decision, but the vice-principals were consulted and given the opportunity to influence that decision.

In four of the six principal/vice-principal relationships teacher evaluation was also shared by the administrators, and principals indicated a great deal of respect for their assistants'

expertise and past experience in this area. In one of the other two situations, the vice-principal lacked the administrative time; in the other, the principal felt that teacher evaluation was a principal's responsibility.

In three cases, each of the administrators looked after teacher evaluation at a certain grade level. In one of these relationships, the two individuals completed their own evaluations independently but then shared them with each other so that any additional feedback could be given and any clarifications be made.

The three administrators in one school shared equal responsibility for teacher evaluation: "Right now, we're in the process of evaluating nine teachers, and we're doing three each." Together, they decided which administrator could most comfortably evaluate each teacher. After, they engaged in dialogue.

Discipline was found to be a shared responsibility in each of the schools. Only in one school did the administrators separate discipline according to grade level, but, even then, it was understood that each could overlap into the other's domain when necessary. It was generally understood amongst the administrators that "whoever's free at the time does the discipline and handles the kids." Another individual affirmed, "If he's in class and there's a discipline situation that needs to be dealt with, I'll deal with it."

Some administrators had joint responsibility in other areas as well, such as "public relations, dealings with parents, and

sitting on parent advisory committees." Although one assistant principal was specifically responsible for operations in grades one to three, the administrators in the school agreed that she would have equal responsibility for the entire elementary program.

In one school, even the conducting of staff meetings was not solely one person's responsibility: "Sometimes we meet as a team with [the staff], and sometimes a couple of us meet with them--whoever happens to be free at the moment does it." The three administrators also alternated in handling textbook rental.

Concerning the running of staff meetings and assemblies, the principal in another school remarked, "I don't believe that I, as the administrator, should always be in charge or run the meeting." He was prepared to share the authority and the responsibility with his vice-principal.

The distribution of duties and the extent to which they would be shared seemed to be determined by the principal: "It depends on the person you're working with. In this situation, that's the way the principal wants it. We do this as a team, and she takes the final responsibility."

Even the manner in which duties were performed was strongly influenced by the principal. Two of the vice-principals reported that they would not do anything of which the principal may disapprove. One of these individuals was very accepting of her designated duties and did not feel that principals "should be going out of their way to accommodate me and my preferences. It's

their school and they're the superintendent of the school. . . . It's easier for me as an assistant to adjust what I'm doing to what they expect me to do." She added that seldom had she strongly disagreed with her principal's ways of handling administration.

Administration Time

Half of the principals that were interviewed considered themselves to be full-time administration, two had approximately 80% administration time, and one principal administered for 40% of her time. The administration time for the vice-principals ranged from 25% to 75%, depending upon the size of the school and how much time the principal was prepared to teach. In one situation, the vice-principal felt that his involvement in administrative tasks, such as staffing, was limited by his heavy teaching load.

Three principals felt that "if I'm giving her jobs and assignments to do, then I should also be giving her time to do them." In at least one case, the principal was teaching and giving up some of his administration time so that the assistant principal would have time as well. This decision allowed more time for the two individuals to work together on certain tasks and to share administrative responsibilities.

Administration time together. Administrators emphasized the importance of scheduling administration time together and, at the beginning of the year, purposely scheduled time together. In one school, the administrators timetabled four afternoons a week when

all three of them would be free together, while another team could only arrange an hour and a half of shared time on Friday mornings. This second team observed that in previous years there had been "a lot of popping in, popping out, and doing it when you thought of it." With decreased time together, it became a matter of writing notes and checking with each other later. There was less spontaneity and greater frustration.

Administrators saw this common time as "time to sit and develop ideas." One individual described it: "That's the time we talk; that's the time we plan; that's the time we get things done." One principal didn't like to disturb the vice-principal when he was teaching. As a result, several decisions were made independently, and planning together as a team was limited.

In another school, shared time did not exist; when the principal was teaching, the vice-principal was free, and vice versa. The small size of the school influenced that decision, which ensured that one administrator would be present at the office at all times. An individual in another school pointed out a flaw in such an arrangement, a flaw that was obvious to those it affected but not easily remedied: "You don't have time together to meet, and I've been in that situation, and it hasn't been good, because you just can't meet and make decisions as a team."

Despite the shortage of time together, one principal stated, "If there's a job on hand that we've got to get together and

resolve, we do it and we take the time to do it. The important thing is to get the job done."

The ideal principal/vice-principal relationship described by one individual was characterized by less teaching and more time for administration and professional development activities. The benefits of increased administration time were clear: "The more time I have, the more time, naturally, that we have to be together, the more we can accomplish, the more we can share, and the more I can be of use to [the principal] in administration."

Involvement, Responsibility, and Ownership

The assistant principals experienced varying levels of involvement in the administration of the school and were given differing amounts of responsibility. These two variables corresponded closely with a sense of ownership.

Involvement. For the vice-principals in the study, their level of involvement depended upon their experience and expertise. The assistant's interests and capabilities were also taken into account. One principal felt that vice-principals should be involved in as much of the school as is possible and recommended: "Give them as much responsibility as they possibly can handle and that they want to take."

Involvement was also limited by the time factor, and assistants sometimes remained uninvolved in certain duties due to time constraints. Still, one vice-principal knew that if he wanted more involvement, he only had to approach the principal:

"I definitely feel that he leaves the openings." This same individual felt that, as "a representative of every committee that's been created in the school," he was quite involved. The principal invited him to contribute to staff memos and welcomed his input in a number of task areas.

The same was true for another assistant principal who, when he first began working on the team, was completely involved in the administration: "I was part of it. I was included in everything, but I didn't have to contribute a whole bunch right off the bat." As he became more comfortable, responsibilities increased, not because it was expected, but because "it's there for me to take."

Involvement was also influenced by the principal and his or her view of the vice-principalship. The vice-principal tended to be more involved if the principal viewed the position as a training ground. If so, the principal often provided opportunity for the vice-principal to develop administrative skills: "I give them the opportunity to take part in all the responsibilities at the school. That in itself is the training. They don't have just a little piece to look after; they have the whole thing."

For another vice-principal, the position had always included several important responsibilities: "You were not given little things to do."

Involvement was often promoted or stimulated by communication between the administrators. In one case, the principal and vice-principal had opened the school and had met every day after

school. Both had been "involved in the creation of some of these ideas and in the sculpting of that philosophy." An individual can only become fully involved if he or she is informed and aware, as this assistant principal explained: "I would probably like to be more involved. A lot of it has to do with communication, being aware of what is happening, being involved in [something] just by being made aware, even if I'm not directly involved."

One administrator wanted her vice-principals to feel that they were contributing to decisions and to the administration of the school. Some changes had occurred in the school due to their suggestions. The principal was planning a two day session outside the school to discuss philosophy and program. The objectives of the meeting were to plan the school program for the following year, to encourage input from the new assistant, and to instill in him a sense of contribution.

Feeling responsible. Being involved in administrative duties was not equivalent to being given responsibility for them. As an illustration, the vice-principal in one school was approached by the principal for her feedback and input regarding staffing, but it was not one of her primary areas of responsibility. She was involved, but the responsibility was someone else's.

One principal wrote down specific tasks for his assistant so the vice-principal would know exactly what his responsibilities were. The assistant was responsible for getting them done, and the principal was merely a supporter and advisor. In another

case, though, the principal tried to develop a feeling of joint responsibility.

This sense of responsibility was emphasized by one assistant principal, who would have appreciated "some guidelines as to what you might be responsible for." She performed a variety of tasks but didn't feel that they were of great significance: "I feel that the things I am doing I am just picking up here and there, and it doesn't come together as being responsible for something."

In a previous relationship, one individual had not felt included in many of the decisions and was responsible for a few minor tasks. He said that, as a result, "you don't really feel like you're the administration." In his present school, he feels a real sense of involvement and says, "Everybody is responsible in the end."

A sense of ownership. Involvement and responsibility are closely related to a sense of ownership: "The people have got to be involved as much as possible with the decision. If they take the ownership of it, then they're going to work towards it." When all members of the team are involved, there is more ownership and commitment.

The principal in one school found it difficult to develop joint responsibility with her vice-principal because of their lack of time to work together. As a result, she made certain decisions arbitrarily. Still, she involved her assistant in other decisions so there would be a greater sense of responsibility and a greater

commitment: "I felt I wanted her input, and I wanted her to be part of that decision, because she's responsible for that too."

In another school, the principal, who strongly advocated a team approach to administration, gave reasons for not choosing to delegate duties:

> It would be easier, I think, if you said, "You do this, and you do this." It might even be more efficient, but I don't think in the end that it has the same ownership or the same team approach or give you the same feeling that you're a valued member of that team.

As she reflected on her own experiences as an assistant principal, she recalled having had few important duties and, consequently, she felt that her position had not been "of real value in the school." She added, "It was [the principal's] school, and I never really felt it was mine."

All three administrators in one school were involved in the decision-making process. Even though it was easier for two of them to make the decision, the third administrator was always included, because he would then feel "that he's an important part of the team and [that] he's not third man on the totem pole."

In this school, the principal and one of the assistants had worked together for several years, shared a vision for the school, and had a thorough understanding of how the school operated. When the third administrator arrived, they had to make a conscious effort to include him in all discussions and to make him feel a part of what already existed within the school: "It takes time. You have to give him time to fit into [the school] and make him a

part of it." The original part of the team also had to be open to a new perspective, new ideas, and new contributions.

Communication

As had been strongly stated in the literature, communication was a fundamental component of the principal/assistant principal relationship. One discerning administrator pointed out that, although administration time together is important, it is of no benefit without effective communication because "if you have all the time in the world, and you couldn't communicate with your partner, you still wouldn't get very far."

When asked how he and his principal worked together in performing administrative tasks, one assistant principal's reply was: "Through daily communication. It's really a big thing so that the right hand knows what the left hand is doing." "The biggest thing is communication," another person responded. "You've got to be talking; you've got to be sharing ideas; you've got to be sharing responsibilities."

The most common medium of communication was oral communication. Messages were sent and received mainly through listening and talking: "Sometimes, it's a matter of listening to the other person, their frustrations or what they feel. Most importantly and most frequently, it's a matter of direct talking with the other person over the issue, discussing and deciding." Written communication, usually in the form of brief memos or sticky notepads, was seldom used and was often avoided. However,

administrators did give each other "copies of things that are sent out to the staff" or a letter to a parent, just to keep each other informed. Insignificant paperwork was sometimes delegated in writing, as one vice-principal explained: "Those kinds of things that she communicates to me through the sticky papers are very straightforward stuff and would have no major impact on the building. If it did, it would be discussed face to face."

The form of communication was determined by the nature of the message and the accessibility of the recipient. Talking was always the preferred form.

Frequency

Only two of the administrative teams scheduled a regular meeting time; one team had weekly lunch meetings to make decisions and discuss staff development, and the other met for an hour every week in accordance with a written agreement dating back to their first meeting. Even so, there was flexibility and, if unable to attend these regular meetings, the administrators met at a more convenient time. Formal meetings were not deemed to be necessary by many of the interviewees. Instead, impromptu meetings were more the norm. They knew when the other had administration time, and, if there was anything to discuss or resolve, an unplanned meeting would be held.

In the past, regular meetings had been helpful for one administrative team because the principal sometimes assumed that

his vice-principal was fully informed when, in fact, she wasn't. This arrangement changed when administration time increased:

> I tried to make it a point last year to meet with [the vice-principal] one day a week, set aside a certain time, and we'd sit and just talk about school problems. We haven't done that this year because we had a bit more [administration] time. I hope she feels free enough to come to my office anytime to discuss things, and I feel free, if she's available, to go and talk to her about them.

Communication between the administrators was typically short in duration but frequent. Several brief contacts were made every day, although sometimes it took five minutes and sometimes it took an hour and a half. Often, one person would initiate the meeting, and various items for discussion might arise. A shortage of common administration time often meant that they used much of their own time to meet, and brief meetings took place at recesses and lunch and after school. One individual commented that, after school, he sometimes would "walk her out to the car to share a few things."

In one school, where there was no shared administration time, the principal and vice-principal were "like two ships passing," and brief contacts were made in the hallway outside their classrooms or at the door as they let their students into the school. Although they had tried to get together at various times, their meetings were often interrupted: "As a result some of the best discussions we've had have been impromptu, sort of thinking on our feet and discussing things on our feet." Like another team that was unable to meet on a regular basis, the individuals worked

independently but then checked in with one another for "updates." They recognized this lack of time as "the biggest stumbling block in terms of trying to do everything together as a team."

Nature of the Communication

Much of the daily communication seemed to be informative in nature, and the administrators discussed "anything that might be necessary," such as upcoming activities, plans for the day, and the progress being made in certain areas. As one respondent described the nature of their meetings: "We discuss what's going on at the school, what has to be done, and what direction we're going to go."

In one school, the administrators brought an agenda to regular meetings so they could discuss "things that are coming up that we want to share with each other, concerns and decisions to be made, questions." Meetings could also include discussions of items raised at district administrators' meetings or of possible student suspensions.

Sometimes, they discussed more confidential topics and vented frustrations: "We talk sometimes about things that we wouldn't talk to the staff about, like an irate parent that really got your goat." To ensure uninterrupted, quality time together, these administrators closed the office door. The closed door was a signal to office staff that they were not to be disturbed.

Purpose of Communication

Closely related to the nature of the content are the reasons for and importance of open communication between the principal and the vice-principal.

Keeping informed. Although administrators met with each other for planning and decision-making purposes, the intent of most of the communication was to keep the other individual "informed and aware of what's going on, even though we're not principally responsible for it." Likewise, one principal tried to keep her vice-principals abreast of what was happening in the school, even though they may not have been directly involved or even though the decision had already been made. "Otherwise," said one respondent, "you're working in a vacuum."

Administrators kept each other informed about numerous happenings and decisions, such as a welfare case where the child was removed from the home or the fact that certain materials were being borrowed from the school. Many of the principals shared, with their assistants, the issues discussed at administrators' meetings, just to increase their awareness. To reciprocate, one vice-principal usually left a short report on the principal's desk, outlining what had happened and what had been done while he was away. The assistant principal in one school even accompanied his principal to administrators' meetings. Similarly, one principal invited his assistant to join him at an interview with a

behavior specialist because he thought it was important that she "finds out where we're at with one of the students in the school."

By keeping each other informed and "up-to-date," any one of the administrators can deal appropriately and knowledgeably with a problem or a situation that requires the making of a decision. For example, if the principal is handling a discipline problem and is unaware of previous discipline measures with that particular student, he could just "start from the ground floor" again and, therefore, deal less effectively with the situation. As one vice-principal clearly declared, "If he's at a meeting downtown and something comes up that has to be acted on, if I know the background, then I can make a better decision." By keeping communication lines open, an administrator can continue with a task that another individual has already begun.

Principals did not like to be "caught high and dry" and felt that, if the administrators were not well-informed, it reflected poorly on the school and the staff. One principal exclaimed, "I'd hate like heck to be confronted by a parent and not know what's happened."

In one case, the vice-principal felt that the principal did not keep her informed. Instead, she acquired information through other staff members or through written material such as memos and newsletters. Another individual felt that, if she was not kept informed and didn't understand the principal's motives, the trust relationship would deteriorate: "If you think the other person is

doing things that you don't know anything about or you're wondering why they're doing them--which would be even worse, I think it would be very hard to work together."

If each administrator is well-informed, they can also convey accurate information to staff, parents, and students. One vice-principal liked to know what the principal was doing in terms of budget because "invariably, people ask you, whether it's your area or not." She was able to be more helpful as a result.

To promote this increased awareness, principals, to whom most of the mail is addressed, relayed pertinent correspondence to their assistants. In one particular school, both administrators read the mail: "It all goes as a package to [the vice-principal] so she's cognizant of all written communication that comes through the school, whether it directly deals with her responsibilities or not." In another case, the vice-principal sorted the mail and decided what was worthy to act upon and what wasn't. However, she always notified the principal about the actions taken.

Consultation. Another reason for the frequent communication between members of an administrative team was the need to gain advice or opinion from each other. This consultation was referred to by the interviewees as "bouncing ideas off" of each other, using each other as a "sounding board," and "checking with each other." Together, these terms helped in explaining the importance of communication in the principal/assistant principal relationship.

In many instances, the administrators worked independently but found it beneficial to deliberate over some courses of action with each other in an effort to determine the best route to take. The advantages were well-known to the administrators: "We benefit as individuals and also as a team because we know more factually what's going on in all the areas, and we each get a different perception of how others are reacting." In agreement, another individual commented on the new perspectives obtained through consultation: "Where one person can see certain things, another can see different points of view or different ways to tackle a situation." Yet another administrator replied, "We help the other see a little more clearly."

Another respondent clarified the importance of perception checks:

> I will invariably make her aware, when I have reached a decision, what that decision is and will allow her the opportunity to react positively or negatively or to ask questions. That's the sounding board role--a perception check to check that I haven't overlooked something.

When evaluating teachers, the administrators in one school relied on this procedure to ensure fairness and clarity in the final report. In another school, the sounding board concept was helpful when the principal was making staffing decisions. In regards to discipline, one assistant principal remarked, "It's nice to have somebody else's opinion as to what step you take next with a student."

Conferring or checking was particularly important for the administrators when they were new to the school, but the frequency lessened as the team members developed a common sense of direction or purpose. However, according to one principal, consultation never ceases, and, to clarify its purpose, she said, "The checking isn't permission-seeking; it is just that--checking."

Because administrators have to make some important decisions, sometimes in isolation, they considered each other both "a sounding board and a confidante." For one principal, it was difficult at times to approach the staff about a situation "because you're in the process of trying to resolve situations and work out possible solutions." He often felt that his assistant principal was the only person he could approach for a reaction.

Although they normally checked with each other before a decision was made, consultation **after** taking a course of action was considered by one individual to be helpful as well. It was a time to re-examine the steps taken and to "reflect on yourself and whether or not you handled it the best way."

Many of the assistant principals, viewing themselves as a liaison between administration and staff, felt that they served as "sounding boards," not only for the principal, but for the staff.

Consultation may sometimes lead to and involve disagreement and argument, which is fine according to one principal "as long as everybody understands the ultimate purpose is to make the best decisions." Another principal recognized the need for individuals

to address the controversy and, in doing so, the relationship would "grow and develop." What's important, says another, is that "when we talk about things that we don't agree with, we can talk about the issue and there's no personality thing involved in it."

It was mentioned by one vice-principal that there was less need for consultation in the discipline area because student records were complete and the discipline policy clearly outlined how to handle the situation. She added, "You don't have to check on everything; common sense will tell you that you do something."

Planning. Another activity that required close communication was short- and long-range planning. "There's a lot of preplanning," admitted one principal, "before we do things." Each September, the administrators sat down together, often with their staffs, to establish priorities and to discuss or plan a mission statement for the year. One individual saw a lot of growth resulting from such an activity: "Going through that process in itself is as important as what you come up with." She also explained the problem that arises if planning does not occur: "Sometimes we're playing 'catch-up' rather than planning for it."

One principal viewed the planning process as exploration for other possibilities and described it in this way: "The commitment to sit down, to discuss goals, to discuss possibilities, to check out alternatives, and to carry it through." She felt that, ideally, she and her assistant should be doing much more planning.

Planning often involved studying the present situation and considering possible changes. It was important for administrators to assess their roles and "to keep an ongoing review of how the jobs are being looked after." At various times, one team met to discuss what was happening within the school and to determine any items or issues to "zero in on or bring up with the staff."

In conclusion, communication played a vital role in the relationship between co-administrators. Oral communication was predominant, and contact was brief but frequent. Administration time together contributed to a closer working relationship. Communication served various purposes, mainly, to keep each other informed, to obtain another perspective, and to plan together.

Decision-making

Communication and decision-making are interrelated. Administrators must be well-informed to make appropriate decisions, which are often made in consultation with each other. The co-administrators in the study shared the responsibility in making decisions. The vice-principals, in particular, attested to varying degrees of involvement in administrative decisions in the school. As was explained by one respondent, there are different types of decisions to be made and each is approached in a different manner:

> There are some decisions that, in my view, [the principal] has to make, because he's the one that has to live with it. There are some decisions that we make together, and there are some decisions that we make in consultation with the staff.

Who is involved and to what extent depends on the type of decision. The principals made minor decisions, such as whether to have a fire drill, independently. More involved decisions, described by one respondent as "the big ones," that concerned such things as staffing and student problems were made collectively. One principal's philosophy was that "the decision is better when more people who are impacted by the decision have a chance to be involved in making that decision."

The decision-making process was described by one principal in four steps: identifying the problem clearly and correctly, studying the options and alternatives, "removing the ones that are obviously not the ones to spend too much time considering," and then choosing and implementing the final decision.

How the decision is made also depends "on how soon the decision has to be made and just how important it is." Routine decisions in one school were made by the individual and then there was a "quick, casual contact" just so the information was shared with the other. For "trendsetters," anything out of the ordinary, the decision was made jointly, after contact with others was made.

Shared Decision-making

When necessary, the administrators made decisions independently but, whenever possible, it was a collaborative effort. Generally, the principals did not see any benefit in making major decisions in isolation. In one school, where all major administrative decisions were made as a threesome, one of

the vice-principals commented, "If a decision is to be made that I think is fairly important and [the principal] is not here, I might defer the decision."

Many of the administrators described a consultative nature to decision-making. Usually, one of them approached the other with a situation for which a decision must be made, shared his or her proposed resolution to the problem, and then asked for a reaction. Dialogue took place until a decision was reached. Whoever was responsible for following through on the decision effected it.

In one school, all major decisions, which were identified as those that affected the routine of the school and included changes to the supervision schedule or to the program, were discussed and made as a team. The procedure was described in this way:

> You confer on them just to make certain that you've got all the information and that everyone's comfortable, and then you put forth what you think your decision will be. They have an opportunity to react to it, and the decision is made from there.

One vice-principal, acting as a "sounding board," was invited to criticize the principal's proposal. The individual felt that his input and his reaction were considered to be valuable contributions that had an influence on the final decision.

All the administrators agreed that, once a decision was made, they supported it totally and shared the consequences. According to one assistant principal, the decision was recognized as "the administration's decision." This support factor will receive more attention later in the research findings.

Staff involvement in decision-making. Shared decision-making was not limited to administration but, in some schools, the staff contributed as well when a decision impacted on them: "The staff are involved in the decision if it affects them." Budgeting and the teacher evaluation policy were two areas where staff often had input.

In at least two of the schools, it was common for the administrators to discuss the situation together and then decide "to take it to the staff and express our view on it, fill them in, and wait for them." One principal described their procedure:

> Usually if it's involving the whole school, we would discuss it ourselves, probably come up with what we would think is a proper dealing with it or procedure to carry out, and then we would take it to the staff meeting and present it, hopefully with the support of staff in which to carry through.

Teachers became involved in committees as well and, in that capacity, participated in the decision-making process.

The administrators in another school were preparing to implement shared decision-making with staff. By involving staff in decision-making, administration would benefit from the ideas and contributions of others, and staff members would develop more ownership for decisions that affect them. In one school, staff were approached to break a deadlock, particularly when the decision concerned them: "With issues that we can't quite reach agreement on, we will sometimes go to the staff."

Principal's Final Say

In all decision-making situations, it was understood by all administrators that the principal has the ultimate authority and the final say. The principals did not exercise this privilege very often: "I can overrule. I can change whatever. That's one of the privileges that the principal has that the assistant doesn't. Both of us have come to understand that that would only happen very rarely and in an extreme situation."

For two principals, their decisions were influenced and guided by a vision they had for their schools. On rare occasions, the principals used their authority, and some decisions were "virtually automatic." One of these principals claimed, "I don't use a lot of clout, but I would if it was something I really felt strongly about and couldn't support professionally and [if it was not] within my own vision of things." In such a case, the principals would make the decision on their own but would also share their philosophy with the assistant(s) and ask for their support.

After consultation with the vice-principal(s), the principal will sometimes consider both perspectives and then make the final decision. The principal's jurisdiction is clear in this quote:

> [The principal] will tell you his views and he will reserve final decision. He's willing to listen to your views and your ideas and, if yours will supplement his or improve on his, he's willing to accept them. But if he still doesn't think that they will be an improvement or if they're just the same, then he'll rather go with what he's got.

The same individual challenged his principal more strongly on certain issues but, in many cases, he wasn't bothered by the principal's decision and, in all cases, supported that decision. Another vice-principal stated that, if the principal believed that his decision was in the best interest of the school and had "taken into account what I've said," she then accepted that decision.

Assistant principals seemed to be very accepting of the final decisions that were made. One individual understood the benefit in the principal having the final say: "I see it's easiest if there is one person who has the final say rather than always trying to come to a consensus, because that just isn't always realistic." Another vice-principal believed that the principal should naturally make the final decision because "[the principal] goes to more meetings than I do. She generally knows more of what is happening than I might in the area of administration and running a school."

Reaching An Agreement

In decision-making, the administrators recognized the importance of agreement and strived, through consultation and dialogue, to reach a harmonious decision. One administrative team tried to reach agreement and, even though the decision may not have been what each considered to be the best one, it was a course of action they both could live with: "You have to have decided what you're going to do, and there has to be agreement. There's no point in saying that we're going to present this united front

if [the principal] has said we're going to do something and I just can't live with it."

The members of one team, who resolved issues before they became major disagreements, shared a similar educational philosophy. Consequently, they reached agreement quickly and couldn't think of an instance "where we haven't zeroed in on what we think is the best solution and agreed to it." Because they think alike, the principal felt that sometimes they may not consider all the alternatives or the perspectives to a situation. He described this as "tunnel vision." Similarly, one assistant principal stated, "I think it's important to agree to disagree at times. To always agree on everything we do would make for not always doing the best thing." To disagree was healthy at times.

Resolving disagreements. There were times when the principal and the vice-principal(s) of a school disagreed on an administrative manoeuvre. They often dialogued and explained to resolve disagreement. In one case, if the administrators felt differently and it wasn't "a matter of life and death," they approached the staff to assist them in making the decision. The vice-principal maintained that, in the case of a disagreement, the principal "is the one whose decision or view is to be followed. We haven't had too many of those where we have really not been able to compromise or sort out some way of dealing with it."

One principal emphasized that, unless the vice-principal leaves the office feeling comfortable with a decision, the

disagreement has not been resolved; only one message should leave the office. As one individual commented, "You have to be upfront with each other and go together. You pull in the same direction. . . . There has to be at least a common understanding." Some administrators even discussed decisions after they had been made, to determine how they perhaps could have done it differently.

One vice-principal did not feel that her ideas were always considered when the principal made a decision. Contrarily, the principal in another school admitted, "The times when I've switched my position to a position that [the assistant] has had, I've probably grown because I think, 'Yes, that does look like a better alternative'."

Agreement was often reached through compromise: "I defend mine; she defends hers, and we take a look at it. It's a give-and-take type of thing."

In conclusion, one administrator summarized well the various ways in which disagreements were handled. Often, who makes the decision depends on what's at stake and whose domain it lies in:

> Just through ongoing dialogue. I can't think of any [decisions] where the end result hasn't been acceptable to either one of us. Not necessarily that both of us feel this is the best course of action, but at least through dialogue, we have understood each other's perspectives. . . . We talk about the various options we've got. If we end up not agreeing, the significance of the decision has a bearing on who wins. If it's a very significant one that has implications in a lot of areas, I win. But if it's not one that I'm particularly hung up on, if it's in [the assistant principal's] domain and she's heard what I've had to say, I'll say, "Go ahead and make your decision."

Independent Decisions

Generally, the administrators made decisions independently in their own areas of responsibility. Straightforward, routine decisions were often made without prior consultation. Two of the respondents mentioned areas or tasks that they had claimed as their own and referred to as "my baby." Decisions in these areas were made in isolation.

Staff members and district resource people were sometimes contacted before an individual made a decision: "When we have gathered whatever information we feel we need, then we just make the decision. That decision may or may not have involved dialogue between the two of us."

One vice-principal claimed that, in some situations, he decided whether or not to involve the principal in a decision and that, if the principal was unavailable, he was prepared to make the decision alone. Often, this was the case when the principal was absent from the school. The vice-principal was then responsible for the school and made the decisions in the principal's absence.

Due to a lack of shared administration time, one principal found that, for the sake of expediency, she was making a fair number of decisions on her own. Her wish was to have "more shared decision-making than what we're doing."

After several years of experience, the vice-principal in another school claimed that he had made decisions on his own in

virtually every area of the school, "from dismissal times to interview times to whether or not we have a meeting, whether or not suspensions are being made, . . ."

In all these situations, though, the administrators informed each other once the decision was made. One respondent described these decisions as "sort of independent, and yet each is knowledgeable of what is happening." The administrators also emphasized that these decisions, except in very rare situations, were supported by their colleagues.

Contributing Factors

The administrators identified a number of factors that contributed to their positive working relationships. Frequent, open communication and shared decision-making, which have already been discussed in detail, were considered highly important by all the respondents. Several others, which are in no particular order, will now be presented.

Knowing Each Other

In a positive working relationship, the principal and vice-principal(s) know and understand "how one another works, how one another operates." There is an awareness of the other person's strong and weak points.

For one administrative team that had worked together for several years, knowing each other well allowed them to make certain decisions and handle situations independently, effectively, and in a manner that would be agreeable to the other:

> I have had enough experience with her to know how she would handle a situation, and she knows how I'd handle them. We are very, very in tune with each other in terms of what the expectations and what the judgment would be on behalf of the other person.

This cognizance, this "feel for each other," develops through communication and observation; it grows from shared experience. One vice-principal postulated that, by sharing experiences and working through situations together, she and the principal had gained a greater knowledge of each other. Because of this heightened awareness, the administrators were able to avoid "stepping on the other person's toes, intentionally or accidentally."

Three respondents mentioned the intuition they developed after working together for a period of time. They gained insight into what and how their co-administrators think: "I can read him like a book sometimes, and he can me too. I can practically read his thoughts and put them down on paper, and I bet I wouldn't be too far wrong. And he could probably do the same thing."

With knowledge comes a greater understanding of each other, an understanding of what the other person believes in and why they work as they do. Said one principal, "The longer we work together and the more we interact, the more we understand each other, and I think understanding is the key to effectively working together."

<u>Similar Philosophy</u>

A predominant contributing factor, mentioned by virtually all the respondents, was a shared philosophy towards education, work,

and children. Often, this philosophy was obvious at the start of the relationship, but it also formed through shared experiences and through learning from each other.

Co-administrators described themselves as being "on the very same wavelength," and "not poles apart on educational philosophy." One vice-principal claimed, "We are very close on our ideas of our roles and of relationships." Another assistant felt that, although she and her principal complemented one another in various ways, "there are a lot of things that are done so similarly," and she perceived that as a strength in the relationship as well.

Administrators attributed ease in reaching agreement on matters to a common philosophy. One administrative team suspected that they could function well, despite limited administration time together, because of their shared understanding "of the school's responsibility towards students and how to carry it out within a Christian environment." Another individual agreed that, once a common philosophy was established, the two administrators were able to work without constantly checking with each other: "You just went ahead and did it."

<u>Similar philosophy towards children</u>. Half the respondents, representing four of the six relationships studied, specifically identified a shared philosophy towards children as a positive factor in their relationship and were able to verbalize that philosophy. These administrators avowed that their decisions and,

indeed, "everything that gets done is done in the best interests of the children."

They shared similar expectations of the students: "We're all on the same wavelength as to discipline. We all believe in the good of the child, and try to work from there." A commitment to the students and a concern for their well-being were the basis of their philosophy. In describing the ideal principal/assistant principal relationship, one subject exclaimed, "They both love kids."

Similar work ethic. Two of the principals mentioned a common, strong work ethic as a contributing factor. There was a willingness to work hard. Problems may have arisen in the relationship if one member of the administrative team "was less committed to school and more committed to holidaying."

Common faith, similar values. Within the Catholic schools studied, faith was also thought to be important in the relationship. The administrators shared similar, Christian values which guided them in their work: "Our philosophy and our vision is in the framework of Catholic philosophies. In that sense, faith is important."

Vision. Some administrative teams had a common vision for the school. One such team perceived leadership as "having a vision for where you want the ship or the school to go and plotting a course to get it there with as little difficulty as possible." They continually checked with this vision to see that

the school was headed in the right direction. In the words of another administrator: "If you don't know where you're going, how do you know how to get there?"

Vision included common educational goals or a team set of goals for the school. These goals were "something that we're working from and towards. We use that to set the tone for the school; to set the theme and the climate that we wanted to work on this year. Those objectives were set, and we're working towards them." "The sharing of vision and dreams was really unique to me," announced one assistant principal.

Some individuals were unable to describe their vision and, in some cases, they weren't sure if they shared a common vision. Although unable to "put it into words," one vice-principal saw the school moving in a worthy direction: "When you walk down the hallways here, you get an idea that there are things happening here that people are proud of and that they're pleased to do."

The principal in one school regretted that she and her assistant had not discussed vision together. She was looking at alternatives for the school but had not shared them because time was scarce and there were other priorities.

<u>Openness</u>

When one thinks of openness, another concept that comes to mind is acceptance; an acceptance of what someone else thinks or feels, an acceptance of change and new ideas, and an acceptance of what may become. Communication without openness is meaningless

and stale, whereas open interaction leads to further learning and growth. This openness was characteristic of the relationships studied.

Speaking frankly with each other. Openness was described as feeling free to speak frankly and directly with each other, whether or not they agreed. Openness is necessary for teamwork:

> For us to work as a team, we have to be able to say to one another what we feel or where we're at. If it's open, then we can deal with it. I think we've been able to do that. We may not always agree but [the issue] is on the table and we know each other's standing on it.

One principal felt that, although they did not always totally agree on decisions, he and the vice-principal were able to discuss a matter and then deal with it, "rather than harboring it in the back of your head." Another individual expected his assistant principal to voice any disagreement regarding a decision. Likewise, he stated, "If I have a problem, I want to communicate it, because I can't expect you to change unless you know what I would like to see changed."

It is also important to share concerns that have a bearing on the relationship, even if they are personal in nature. For example, one vice-principal expressed, to the new principal, the disappointment felt in not having been granted the principalship. The individual added, "Those things have to be dealt with too."

Openness, therefore, involves the sharing of, not only your strengths, but your frustrations and fears as well as "your anxieties, your vulnerability, the fact that maybe you can't

handle something." Trust breeds openness, and, as one person claimed, "if you have strong trust, then you're not afraid to show where your leadership is strong or where your leadership is weak."

Approachability/willingness to communicate. Another positive factor was that the individuals were always willing to make time for discussion. With regard to her assistant, one principal claimed, "She's very approachable in terms of being able to go to her to talk about anything. I don't ever feel that I've had a problem in being able to go and talk to her."

Although there was no regularly scheduled time to meet, one administrator could, at any time, express her views, ask questions, or make suggestions. One vice-principal described his principal as "readily available" and, if busy, willing to meet as soon as possible.

In a positive working relationship, the administrators not only find the time to discuss matters with each other but feel comfortable in talking with each other about various topics. This factor was confirmed by one vice-principal: "We enjoy talking to each other. We can talk personally about things--off the record, or we can talk on business--to the state of the school." He added that, in an ideal relationship, the two administrators are "both interested in communicating with each other and keep communication lines open at all times."

Also important is that the principal interact openly with staff: "I've seen some principals that just kind of huddle in the office for most of the day."

Listening to each other. Administrators considered listening to be an important skill. On one hand, open and effective communication involved a frank and clear delivery but, on the other hand, it demanded careful listening. One vice-principal felt that she and her principal just naturally allowed each other "the freedom to express our opinions, our theories, as to what we'd like to see done and how we'd like to see it done." She emphasized, "You just have to respect one another's opinions and hear each other out and listen to what the other person is saying."

Constructive criticism. Constructive criticism was described by one individual as "the trust factor in which I can sit down and tell [the principal] something that I'm concerned about or she can sit down and tell me something that she's concerned about without being personally offended by it."

In one case, the vice-principal, an experienced administrator who was new to the school, welcomed helpful criticism: "My weakness is that I try to do everything for the teachers. I need someone to say, 'Hey, you don't have to do all that stuff'." Another individual realized the benefit to this form of openness and recommended, "I think constructive criticism is fair. Share it. Don't hold it back."

Criticism was most acceptable when it was given in the context of "a colleague sharing with a colleague" and as a formative suggestion. Therefore, as one principal noted, "Tact and diplomacy have a place at all times." Another individual cautioned about tactless remarks, saying, "I can't beat around the bush. That's not always right. Sometimes you can tread on other people's toes by doing it."

Openness to new ideas. The administrators were willing to try new ideas and were "able to try out a new approach and see what happens." Through reading articles and taking courses in educational administration, one particular team kept abreast with recent research and new approaches. They then implemented some of these new ideas within the school. Also, the principal encouraged openness amongst members of the administrative team by modelling open communication. She firmly stated, "The more open you are to one another, the more growth takes place."

Team Approach

During the interviews, the administrators discussed the team concept frequently and highlighted certain characteristics that were often evident in their working relationship. One principal viewed all the stakeholders in the educational process as part of the team: students, teachers, parents, and administrators. However, the following material focuses more on aspects of the team approach as it is developed by the administrative team, specifically the principal and his or her assistant(s).

A sense of working together or of partnership. The administration of the school, according to one principal, is "a cooperative team venture," and each administrator is a partner in the leadership process. Characteristically, many of the duties are shared, as was discussed earlier in this chapter. Rather than each administrator managing specific tasks, they often viewed a responsibility as "our thing to do" and were "expected to get involved in everything."

Although the principal and vice-principal in one school had separate areas of primary responsibility, one individual commented, "We realize that nothing is restricted from our input, from our comment, from our involvement. The total package is a team approach. At least that's the objective." Staff development in another school was addressed by all three administrators. Together, they planned and presented the program for each weekly staff meeting.

Sense of involvement and ownership. Due to open lines of communication, shared responsibilities, and group decisions, imperative components in teamwork, members of the teams had a sense of involvement in the administration of the school: "We have a sense of ownership, because we've all had input."

In one case, the principal recognized the assistant principals as "equals," each with talents and skills to strengthen the leadership team. After working together on a project, they shared a sense of accomplishment, and the principal insisted on

"giving credit to everybody on the team." One vice-principal, who considered himself to be an equal with his principal, stated, "I feel very much an ownership in this school, very much a part of what is happening."

One vice-principal defined the team approach as "a system of administration in which authority and participation are interwoven to create a spirit of teamwork in the problem-solving process." She felt that both concepts should be present during policy formation and implementation as well as in day-to-day duties.

Mutual decision-making. Once again, this topic has been previously discussed but, as one individual claimed, it is a vital part of teamwork: "I see teamwork as discussing and making mutual decisions; not just informing the other as to what's been done."

One vice-principal perceived the administrative team in his school as "not an equal team," because the principal had the final decision. Still, due to the dialogue and shared decision-making, he considered it to be a team. The principal in another school recognized the power that she could have but chose not to make decisions in isolation. Instead, she chose to develop a team approach: "I could have the final decision if I wanted it to be that way, but my preference would be that we all work as a team."

Common philosophy and goals. An administrative team, sharing a philosophy, works together for a common good and towards common goals. Many of the administrators mentioned that it was important to "pull together" and in the same direction in order to achieve

these goals. For example, one principal commented, "I don't want to lose sight of the fact that we are here for a purpose, and that's to give the students the best education possible. We can only do that if we're going to work in harmony and as a team."

When asked to describe an administrative team, another principal gave this response:

> People that have a common philosophy, united goals, a vision for where you're going. Not necessarily an identical game plan for how you're going to get there but, through working together, you work out that game plan. A group, whether it's two or more people, that are working together for the betterment of kids and the school.

A united front. It was vital that the administrators, after making a decision together, present a united front to the staff, parents, and students: "When it comes out of our offices, it comes across as a team decision." This support was important even if they did not necessarily agree on the decision. One principal felt strongly about this cohesiveness; without it, he and his assistant would be counterproductive and would be wasting time. He stated emphatically, "When we walk out this door, there's going to be one decision. If there isn't, then there's no use of us being together." Another individual agreed, "You're either a team or you're not. You really are inviting trouble if you're not presenting a united front." The administrators clearly and firmly stated that presenting a united front and giving full support to one another were necessary.

Administrators wanted staff members and parents to perceive them as a team: "It's important that the staff doesn't pick up

either a lack of support or a lack of confidence in a decision." At staff meetings, the two administrators in one school sat beside each other as a sign of unity. In another school, where the administrators called themselves "the A-team," all letters and staff memos were signed "from the A-team." The team approach was always reinforced, and the team concept became very obvious to the teachers. The administrators met every day to discuss school business, a practice the staff was well aware of, and they emerged from the meeting as a united front. They then spoke as a team and supported decisions when they were presented at staff meetings. They exemplified the school motto, which read: "Together we are strong."

When a united front was evident, staff could not approach each administrator and receive different or opposing messages. Staff could not "play one administrator off against the other." One principal explained, "We're not getting the situation where, if they don't like what [the vice-principal] has decided, they come to me and see if I might do something different." The united front amongst the administrators often meant that the staff would be united as well. In other words, the administrative team promoted a team spirit amongst the staff.

According to one principal, school staff can easily sense disunity amongst administrators. She reflected on a past experience when, although the administrators were careful in

conveying a united front to the staff, they had been, indeed, struggling as a team and the staff had sensed it.

In at least two of the schools, the administrators strived to develop a team approach and consciously worked towards it, as this vice-principal explained, "We're very conscious of our team approach, very in tune with the fact that we want to work together and make decisions together and that we're always supportive."

Time and commitment. These two ingredients were considered to be necessary for the team approach to be realized. In the eyes of one individual, administrators "owe each other the courtesy and the time that's required for administrators to work as a team." According to one vice-principal, who was experienced with administrative teamwork, "the team approach is very time-c...suming, but the rewards are remarkable." These rewards will be described later in this chapter.

Support

Support was a predominant factor in the relationships between the principals and assistant principals in the study. Support was an expectation or "a given" in the relationship and was evident in various ways. Often, it was tacit and given "without thinking."

Support was very clear in the decision-making process. Group decisions required support even if the administrators did not agree: "If we've agreed to do something in a particular way, then I think that you have to give it your best shot, whether or not you personally are in agreement. You have to support each other."

Independent decisions were treated in the same manner. For example, one vice-principal explained that, if a decision had to be made, "I'll make it and I have every confidence that I'll be backed."

When a dissatisfied staff member approached him regarding one of the principal's decisions, one vice-principal supported his colleague by trying to understand his views and then explaining the principal's rationale and reasoning to the staff member. Two other respondents mentioned that they gave this form of support when staff members criticized their co-administrators. They also supported one another in the presence of students and discontented parents.

Much of the time, support took the shape of empathy, encouragement, or "a shoulder to cry on." One individual admitted, "Things can get pretty tough sometimes, dealing with all these different individuals." Many of the respondents felt safe in venting frustration in the presence of their co-administrators and knew that they would be listened to and supported.

Two individuals felt that the administrators can be "a little lonely" because not everyone understands the reasons behind their decisions. However, these reasons can be shared with each other, and, even though one individual may have done it differently, colleagues can support each other:

> In administration, often what you hear from the staff are the things you've done wrong, and often we make very tough decisions that other people don't necessarily agree with. It's important that somebody else can say, "I can see why you

did that."

Support in a positive relationship is mutual. One respondent described its reciprocal nature in this manner: "I think she leans on me, and I lean on her." Whenever the principal presented new ideas and motivational activities to the staff, the assistant principal was one to "get behind her and get it going and do them."

By being conscious of the pressures her assistant was dealing with in her personal life and by relieving some of the pressures at school, one principal quietly supported her vice-principal. Another principal offered support to his assistant by teaching her class or willingly changing the schedule if she needed more time to complete a task. She did the same for him. In these cases, support took the form of compassion and flexibility, respectively.

With support comes also a sense of togetherness and security, of not being alone or solely responsible. As one vice-principal said, "We're in this together." Another assistant principal felt comfortable in taking risks and trying new ideas because his principal challenged him and had confidence in their "ability to take risks together." In discussing support, his principal also expounded on its importance in the relationship: "If people don't appreciate each other and they don't believe in each other, I think [the relationship] all starts to crumble. But if you have support, everything works!"

Professionalism

To maintain a healthy working relationship, the individuals had to act professionally. This behavior is in one sense dictated by the code of ethics in the teaching profession. For instance, they are obligated to share a personal grievance or concern with each other before sharing it with somebody else. However, one principal pointed out that "even if the code of ethics wasn't there, our own personal philosophy and code of behavior should be above reproach." Individuals must stand on their own professional and personal convictions.

The most commonly mentioned example was that administrators must not undermine each other, particularly in the presence of staff. One person stated, "There is a matter of ethics involved, and that is you can't go against or undermine the other person."

As professionals, the principal and assistant principal(s) are expected to jointly support decisions that are made. One individual related an earlier experience in her career, when she had to support her principal's decisions, even though their philosophies were very different. "All the vice-principal can do in a situation like that," she said, "is to support the principal and, if it's really contrary to [his or her] philosophy, to leave."

Trust and Confidence

Earlier, it was stated that, as the principal/vice-principal relationship developed, the trust and confidence in each other

increased. This trust relationship was based on a number of factors including genuine confidence in the other's abilities, openness, and years of working together. Administrators tended to trust each other if they shared similar philosophies and operated in similar ways. One vice-principal had known of her principal before they began working together and felt an automatic trust, founded on respect for the principal's reputation and experience.

The administrators developed a greater trust in each other as they recognized each other's abilities. One individual valued the assistant's input in administrative matters: "She has usually thought it through very well, and she speaks from knowledge."

The trust strengthened if they were also able to openly share their vulnerabilities and weaknesses. It grew from mutual support and professional behavior as well. One administrator stated that, if he shared something with his vice-principal in confidence, "I trust him not to betray that confidentiality."

In a positive relationship, this trust is demonstrated through open communication, independent decision-making, and the principal's ability to delegate a task to the assistant principal and then allow him or her the freedom to complete it. Two principals boasted a strong trust in their assistants, saying, "I trust her implicitly."

Respect

The administrators demonstrated a respect for each other's abilities, the other's judgment in decision-making, and even each

other's right to make mistakes. To respect one another is to accept each other and to "allow for each other's personality traits, each other's temperament." One individual said of his principal, "He has always been really accepting and forgiving with me. He very rarely has to question me about this [duty or decision]."

Respect increased when the administrators noticed "the success that each of us has been able to muster in certain areas." One respondent attributed her willingness to support decisions, even if she didn't agree with them, to respect and trust. If the principal made the final decision, the vice-principal respected his discretion.

Sense of Humor

Several administrators identified sense of humor as a contributing factor in their positive working relationship. By sharing a sense of humor, they are able to cope with the pressures of administrative work and "to keep things in perspective." One principal vouched for its benefits: "It helps us keep our sanity and certainly helps me to be more relaxed with what I'm doing."

Crisis Situation

Two of the relationships studied grew stronger as a result of a crisis. In one case, the school secretary, who possessed valuable knowledge and who assisted the administrators in numerous ways, became ill shortly after the vice-principal arrived at the school. Consequently, both administrators found it difficult to

efficiently carry out some of their duties. The vice-principal explained how this stressful time affected their relationship: "One of the things that has helped to some extent, although it was difficult for both of us, is the fact that we had to pitch in and do the best we could when we were without a secretary. We had to pull together or we would have flopped."

In the second situation, the administrators were forced to disband their parent advisory committee. This decision was difficult to make, but the experience of working together and supporting each other helped them build a stronger relationship: "You've got to work at it and be together and go through the pain and suffering and the agony of it. And you grow from that."

Complementary Strengths

Another factor that all respondents acknowledged was that the individuals in a positive relationship complement each other. Each administrator has abilities and finely-tuned skills that the other person may not possess; each person has had different experiences. An administrator explained that, since one person alone is not an expert in all areas, "we're looking at our skills, our strengths, and how we can have our strengths work together to make it a better-administered school."

In one administrative dyad, the principal was oriented to the upper elementary area whereas his colleague had expertise in Early Childhood education. One administrator's strength lay in the language arts area, while the other was strong in the math/science

area. In another school, one administrator had strong managerial skills and, in contrast, the other was talented in the area of human relations. While their responsibilities reflected their particular areas of expertise, the two individuals also attempted to learn from each other.

The members of each administrative team drew from each other's talents and abilities. For example, one principal admired his assistant's excellent knowledge of curriculum, and he relied "very heavily on her for advice in those areas." Another subject had more experience in dealing with "hard-nut" discipline cases, and his colleague would call on him to handle them. In another case, the vice-principal explained their planning procedure: "She comes up with these ideas, and I can somehow help her put them down on paper and improve them or change them. I'm far more sequentially oriented than she is."

The complementary nature of the administrators was evident in various other ways. In one administrative dyad, the assistant principal was also a parent, whereas her colleague was not. She commented, "We complement one another because our personal lives are somewhat different." Two individuals were perceived as "calming factors" in their relationships. The other administrator in one of these cases approached tasks differently than her assistant: "I sometimes want to get things done, and she will take some time to think about it. That's probably a good thing."

It was noted by one vice-principal that their somewhat different approaches to dealing with a discipline problem were also an asset. Their expectations of the students were similar, "but the way we deliver it is different." The administrators in another school also handled discipline in a complementary fashion. One person was firm, while the other could be more of a nurturer. Between the two, a balance was attained. One member of the team added, "It's a bit like a parenting relationship."

The administrators also complemented each other because their experiences were different. They used these varied experiences to discover the best solution to problems. Many of the assistant principals recognized the experiences of their principals as being a strength. One of them commented, "[The principal] has a vast experience of administering schools. I don't have that experience."

Each individual in a relationship has different strengths, skills, and talents. Some people are creative; others are skillful in budgeting. Some are task-oriented and others are people-oriented. One administrator described this complementarity in the relationship concisely. He said, "Our differences are also strengths."

Learning From Each Other

Because of their complementary strengths, several of the administrators reported that they had learned from each other. Each individual had something to offer the team in terms of

expertise or experience. Regardless of the years of experience, the respondents continued to observe growth in themselves and their colleagues: "You keep getting better at what you do and keep refining and polishing what you do." One vice-principal felt that she had learned something from each of the principals she had worked with.

One principal, impressed with his assistant's ability to analyze the teaching process and to evaluate, commented, "I don't think I have the skills she has in that, so I think I can learn from her." Another individual felt she could learn from her colleague's strong people skills.

In another case, the two assistant principals worked together on timetabling. One of them, a new but experienced administrator, described how they shared their different ways of handling the task and learned from each other: "He showed me some things that he does, the way he timetables, and I did some of the things I do, and we got a timetable out of it."

Administrators learn from each other's example, as this individual realized: "I'm more convinced now as years go by that people learn more from the example I set than from what I say." As was discussed earlier, modelling was part of the training process, and administrators demonstrated certain skills and attitudes that they wanted to impart on the team.

Learning together.

Administrators not only learn from observing each other, but they learn from working together, from trying new ideas together, and from their shared successes and failures. When describing an ideal working relationship, one respondent included, "They're both interested in growth, professional growth." In one school, the administrators also took summer courses together, implemented the new ideas in the school, and learned together. The principal explained the process of implementing clinical supervision in the school:

> We both did the staff development; we script-taped in the classroom; we analyzed lessons together; we built in coaching; we talked together about our experiences with teachers and how this didn't work and how that did work. Basically, we taught each other.

Complimenting One Another/Admiration

The administrators recognized and appreciated the strengths of their colleagues. They admired skills and qualities, such as the other's patience, knowledge of program, enthusiasm, and expertise in a certain area. However, most of them indicated that they did not compliment each other a great deal on a daily basis. Some respondents felt that they were naturally inclined to giving compliments, whereas others, even though they were very complimentary of their colleagues during the interviews, gave fewer compliments.

In one case, the administrators gave credit when it was due and when the opportunity was there: "Whenever the opportunity

comes, we'll do it. I don't think we make a concerted effort. It's just part of our personality. We both like to give people credit for things when we see them whether it's ourselves or staff members or kids."

Another individual believed more in self-satisfaction and pride in one's own work: "I think there are intrinsic rewards that you as a person gets from doing a job and knowing it's done well." In another relationship, they acknowledged the finished task or the action rather than directly complimenting the person.

Taking Initiative

Although this pertained more to the vice-principals than the principals, both administrators took the initiative to perform certain tasks as they saw the need or developed the interest. Many of the assistants tended to have fewer responsibilities early in the relationship. They accepted and sought more responsibility as time passed and they felt more capable.

At busy times during the school year, one vice-principal was accustomed to completing a task or an assignment that was on the principal's desk. She took the initiative and completed the task so as to help her colleagues. "We worked so closely together there," she explained, "that everybody knew everybody else's job. If you had some time, [you would] just go have a look and pick it up and do it."

Principals did not always delegate duties to their assistants. One vice-principal felt that it was the assistant's

responsibility to get involved and to take certain jobs upon themselves "rather than to sit back and wait for jobs to be given to you."

Delegating Duties and Letting Go

Several principals commented on the importance of assigning or delegating duties to their assistants and then allowing them to handle it alone, without interference. This policy required trust in and respect for the other individual: "I try to let go and allow her the opportunity to sink or swim, if it's in her domain."

The same applied if the individual, whether it be the principal or the vice-principal, acquired the task on his or her own initiative. In one school, when one of the administrators had started dealing with a discipline problem or some course of action, the other tried to remain uninvolved: "If [the assistant principal] has initiated working with someone, I stay out of it."

One assistant principal, although he kept his principal informed, was given the freedom to make decisions independently in his own areas of responsibility. He explained, "Within those programs, [the principal] lets me have free rein."

In another case, the vice-principal also perceived freedom in how he dealt with certain matters. He felt that the principal trusted his ability and his judgment and simply wanted to be kept informed about what was done or decided.

Social Relationship

A social relationship outside the school environment was not deemed to be important or necessary by the administrators: "The relationship can be a working one that exists in school and not necessarily outside." More important to them was respect for each other's personal life and, as one respondent indicated, "It's got to be more of a professional relationship with a good understanding of one another."

At least two of the respondents perceived a danger in mixing personal relationships with professional relationships on the job. One vice-principal believed that decisions, which should normally be made for educationally sound reasons and in the best interests of the children and the school, may be made for the wrong reasons if a personal relationship exists between administrators. Another individual shared a similar perspective: "If it becomes too close a personal thing, you lose your sense of rationality, because you don't want to hurt the person." Thus, administrative decisions may become less objective and more difficult.

In mixed relationships, where one administrator is a man and the other is a woman, too much social interaction with each other may be misinterpreted by other people. This consideration was mentioned by one female administrator.

Although she thought that a closer relationship outside the work situation may have benefits, one assistant principal added, "I don't think it's something that we need to strive for. You may

see a side of the person that you might not see, for instance, a sense of humor." Members of another administrative team did not socialize outside the school, except for occasional lunch meetings at which they discussed school matters mainly. However, one of these individuals also felt it was important to share certain happenings in their personal lives. Sharing personal concerns and interests led to a greater understanding for each other, just as it did in staff relations. She explained, "There are always people that are having problems and, if you don't know what they are, you don't know why they're acting the way they are. That's true with us too. We share that [personal concerns] more with each other than with the staff."

Many of the administrators attended staff functions and described an active social life within the school. However, none of them socialized together outside of school. One individual was considering inviting his colleague and his family to his home "as a gesture that you are more than just a working partner; you are a friend."

Getting Out Of School Together

Although they didn't develop a close relationship outside of school, many administrative teams enjoyed time spent together outside of the school, including administrators' meetings and lunch meetings. In many cases, lunch meetings were regularly scheduled. For example, one team held a lunch meeting every Wednesday, whereas the two administrators at another school often

met for lunch every Friday. They discussed both business and social matters. They recognized the benefits in getting away from the school together, of escaping the demands of school life to attend a meeting together, or of just having an uninterrupted discussion or planning session.

Male/Female Relationship

Generally, the administrators did not perceive the male/female combination that existed on some teams as a factor influencing the relationship. One principal did not feel that it made a difference, saying, "I don't even think of it in terms of male and female. We are professional people working together."

Still, she described an incident that occurred earlier in her career in which a male staff member did not feel it was appropriate for a female principal to be handling a difficult discipline case. Similarly, one female administrator mentioned that her male colleagues have always chosen to administer corporal punishment in the school, even when she was the principal.

One female administrator felt that her male colleague would be more open with another male than he was with her. On the other hand, another individual felt that a male/female team provided a balance: "I think that a man and a woman working together makes for a strong administrative team. . . . Men and women often have different strengths." In this case, the male "played the heavy with the students," whereas she could sometimes play a gentler role. She also felt that the students benefited from seeing both

men and women in leadership roles. Nevertheless, the relationship was not the same as two men would have, and she added, "There are, socially, some niceties that should be observed. You wouldn't want people to get the wrong idea if you're always together."

Educational Background and Experience

One's education and administrative experience were also considered to have an effect on the working relationship between the principal and the assistant principal.

Educational background.

Six of the respondents had attained Master's degrees, five in Educational Administration. Two of the remaining administrators had taken courses but not necessarily for university credit. One individual thought educational background had an influence on the relationship because it provided a knowledge base on which to work. Another principal emphasized the importance of being knowledgeable of recent educational research, in order to help in staff development. One vice-principal, who tried to keep abreast of recent developments in education, did not possess a Master's degree and did not feel that it was necessary.

Years of working together.

The administrators reported ongoing growth in the working relationship and attributed the positive nature of their relationship to years of working together. In one situation, two of the administrators had been working together for seven years and, as a result, knew each other well. The principal exclaimed,

"I almost know what he's thinking before he opens his mouth. If a situation arises, he knows exactly how I'm going to deal with it, and I know exactly how he's going to deal with it." The relationship with the second assistant principal was different, though, because he was new to the school and the principal didn't know him as well.

Years of working together is only a factor, though, if there is growth in the relationship: "If it [the relationship] has sort of reached its peak, 'x' number of years isn't going to help any."

Working in various schools. Working with a number of administrators in different schools during one's career was recommended by two of the respondents. New experiences are acquired in each relationship, and an administrator that has moved around has much to offer a team. One vice-principal, who had worked with several principals, said, "I have worked with some superb principals and learned something from every one of them."

Another administrative team had worked together for several years. Growth was still very evident in the relationship, but the principal felt that a transfer would result in even more growth: "If we both moved and went in different directions, we would probably learn a lot more."

Who was there first; tenure. The newcomer in the school, whether it be the principal or the assistant principal, experienced a period of adjustment. The newcomer tended to approach his or her colleague for information and for an

understanding of what had been done in the past. One vice-principal described her first year at the school: "I had to work very hard for the first year just to get the feel of the school, the feel of the community and the needs of this particular area." This administrator spent the first year learning about the school and the people within it, and only in the second year did she feel prepared to initiate change and become more involved.

In two cases, the principal was the newest member of the team. They learned a great deal from their assistant principals. One of these principals felt that the assistant's experience and background at the school contributed to their relationship:

> [The assistant principal's] length of tenure here at the school has been invaluable. She knows the kids, knows the parents, knows the history of what has gone on, and is able to bring in a good deal of that information into our decisions. Maybe I come up with an idea, and she knows that it was tried three years ago and didn't work because of this reason. That's information that I need.

Past Experience

When the administrators entered their working relationships, they brought with them their past experiences, experiences they had learned from. Most of the principals had been assistant principals at one time; three of the vice-principals had had past experience as principals; and the majority had worked with other administrators prior to their present situation. The following information pertains to the first two groups of people and how their past experience affected their present working relationship.

Vice-principals with experience as a principal. For three of the vice-principals, the principal/assistant principal relationship was somewhat different due to their prior experience in the role of principal. These individuals generally had less to learn on the job and required very little training. Their principals had greater confidence in their ability and, therefore, tended to give them more responsibilities. One of these vice-principals commented, "Because [the principal] knew that I had been a principal before, she was maybe expecting more from me than she normally would from somebody in their first year or so as an assistant-principal."

Similarly, another individual had taken greater responsibility because of his past experience, not only as an administrator but as a teacher. The principals, consequently, received more assistance from these individuals in the early stages of the relationship than those who were working with inexperienced vice-principals.

One vice-principal with twelve years of administrative experience had become familiar with all administrative duties and had been given "a fair bit of authority over the years, in various roles." Her experience influenced her interaction with the principal, and she was working on what she called "a second step." In earlier years, she had approached the principal for direction, but now it was a matter of sharing information with him, making suggestions, and obtaining some feedback.

In these cases, the vice-principals also took more initiative in performing tasks. One individual felt comfortable enough to pick up an assignment from the principal's desk and complete it independently and without guidance.

One assistant principal had served as the acting principal for eight months of the previous year while the principal recuperated from an illness. Although, as acting principal, she was not exposed to new tasks during that time period, the principal, while he was on leave, developed confidence in the assistant and respect for her abilities: "I think [the assistant principal], having had a fairly successful experience in the principalship, had a newfound confidence in her own abilities, and certainly I had some newfound information about her abilities that gave me confidence in assigning certain responsibilities [to her]." In many ways, the vice-principal had proven herself, to students and staff, to be capable of handling the tasks and responsibilities of the principalship, and that had an effect on the working relationship. In a sense, she became more of an equal.

This assistant principal also gained a new perspective on administration and a greater awareness of the principal's responsibilities. Her colleague felt that the experience as principal "helped her understand some of the pressures and things that I face, and we can dialogue on that basis a little more

clearly." Consequently, there was increased understanding between the two administrators.

What principals learned from their own vice-principalship. During the interviews, the principals often reflected on their own experiences as assistant principals. These experiences have influenced the relationships that they now share with their vice-principals. For example, one principal remembered performing very specific, limited tasks as an assistant principal: "When I was an assistant, I only got to do certain things. I only knew, when I became a principal, how to do textbook rental and one or two other things. Simply, I don't think I was trained." As a principal, she tried to improve the experience for her own assistants, treated the vice-principalship as a training ground, and developed a team approach to administration.

Another principal related a story from his days as an assistant. His principal had exercised the right to make the final decision, but he had done so without considering the vice-principal's remarks: "From that experience, I learned that hopefully you would listen or take some advice [from the vice-principal]."

In another case, the individual remembered the two administrative roles as being very similar when he was an assistant. Because of these experiences, he also treated the roles as being similar when he became a principal.

The administrators learned from their experiences. One assistant principal, an ex-principal, had learned a great deal about working together from his present administrative team. He stated that his ways of working with an assistant would be different if he were a principal again, and he outlined the anticipated changes: "There's going to be more communication. There's going to be time set aside for both of us, quality time that we can spend together for looking at the school, on a regular basis."

Willingness to Work Together and Hard

A positive working relationship developed when both administrators were willing to work hard at their job and at the relationship. Stated one vice-principal, "I'm not afraid to give time to the building," while another identified "perseverance" as a virtue in frustrating times.

Guided by a common philosophy and aiming towards similar goals, administrators described a willingness to work together. One individual explained his desire to maintain the positive relationship with the principal: "I'm trying to keep the relationship between administrators as constructive as possible, and right now we don't really have any roadblocks, any hang-ups, any little personality thing that we have to step around. I'd like to preserve it as much as I can."

Having interacted with his vice-principal for two years, one principal described how his perceptions of administration had been

affected: "Basically, my view or philosophy on education has been confirmed as people demonstrate a willingness to work together, and a preparedness to put in the time and energy to make a situation work."

Other Significant Factors

Additional factors that contribute to a positive relationship between the principal and vice-principal were described by the respondents.

An efficient secretary. Two of the respondents gave credit to their secretaries for assisting in the smooth running of the school. They had "full faith" in their secretary's organizational skills and ability to handle the routine paperwork efficiently. The principal in one school appreciated the secretary's reminders of upcoming meetings and deadlines: "We have an extremely competent head secretary who is able to keep us both on track. She is fantastic at knowing when deadlines have to be met."

Physical layout of the school. In all the schools, co-administrators had adjacent offices which allowed for increased accessibility to one another and easier communication. The close proximity of the offices was conducive to communication, as this individual explained:

> The physical setup here is such that [the vice-principal's] office, the school office, and my office are very close. And this hallway in here is actually where she and I meet a lot. If she's coming through, I can say, "Have you got a minute?"

Hindering Factors

Although the administrators identified many factors that contributed to a positive working relationship, they also mentioned certain factors that prevented their relationship from reaching its fullest potential.

Time Constraints

Due to various factors and circumstances, a lack of time surfaced as a limiting or hindering factor in the working relationship. Communication was the area most affected by it.

Shortage of administration time together. Time constraints sometimes made it more difficult for administrators to meet and work together. One team in particular could not find a regular time to meet without interruption. Because the school was small, both administrators spent much of their time teaching and had less administration time. As a result, many administrative tasks were done either independently or during after-school hours. Without the time to plan ahead as a team, the principal felt that they were "doing things at the very last minute."

The large size of the school had a limiting effect on the time administrators had to meet in another school. Because they lacked administration time, the principal claimed, "It is really hard in a school this size to find time to talk." In order to prevent or relieve overly large classes, the administrators had given up some of their administration time and were teaching more.

Increased number of tasks. Two of the respondents discussed the effects of their increasing number of responsibilities on the time available to meet with their colleagues. One of them explained, "There are so many more tasks that are coming down upon us to get done that we feel that there's not enough time to address all of them as fairly as we'd like to and as completely as we'd like to. That's a frustration for us." The increasing amounts of paperwork, including the large quantities of correspondence that passes through the school, caused a second person to say, "There's more administrivia to take care of."

Availability. Several of the respondents expressed some frustration in that they were not always able to meet with their co-administrators when they needed to, even though they had common administration time. A typical remark from these administrators was: "Sometimes it's really frustrating because I want to talk to him about something and he's just not available." Their colleagues often had heavy workloads or were busy meeting with parents, students, and teachers. One principal realized the frustration that her vice-principal was feeling, and remarked, "One of the frustrations for her, I know, is she's waiting to talk to me, and usually there are people coming in that want to see the principal, or I'm on the phone." Another individual, a principal, felt some frustration because he liked to bounce ideas off of the vice-principal but she was often unavailable.

Reflecting on a previous working relationship, one individual felt that the inability to meet with the principal had hindered the relationship: "She'd have her door closed a lot of time, involved with somebody else. We just weren't meeting and things weren't getting done; things weren't being shared and things got behind."

Communication Breakdown

Communication was recognized as a vital component of the relationship between principal and assistant principal. When communication lines were ineffective or deteriorating, there was dissatisfaction and frustration for the administrators involved.

In one case, the vice-principal was often too busy to attend the weekly meeting that was scheduled with the principal. Another individual felt that, when they first started working together, she and her colleague met more often to discuss the direction the school was moving in. However, after a number of years, she felt that they did not meet often enough to discuss priorities, to plan, and to set goals and objectives; nor did she feel that her colleague kept her fully informed.

Size of the School

Although this factor has been discussed to some degree, it is worthy to note the effects of the largeness of one school on how the administrators worked together. One vice-principal described the problems that developed as their school grew larger and, particularly, how their vision for the school was affected:

> It [The vision] is a little fractured right now because of the size of our school. We are having trouble keeping it all right and tuned, for several reasons. You get a lot more kids that are much harder to control. Communication is more difficult. You get thirty-five teachers; you're going to get seven or eight who really don't buy your philosophy. . . . There are more people that you have to try and reach and show them your vision. . . . And there's less time to do it in.

Due to the size of the school, administration became more time-consuming and stressful.

Outside Circumstances

The principal/assistant principal relationship was sometimes influenced by uncontrollable circumstances at home and at school. For example, in one case, one administrator's poor health, challenging teaching assignment, and newness to the school made it difficult for her to get fully involved in the administration of the school. When the secretary left unexpectedly, both administrators experienced frustration and the relationship was somewhat strained as a result.

Personal problems and family concerns were also reflected in their work at school. Regarding these outside factors, one individual commented, "I suppose these things come into play quite often, things we have no control over."

Unsettled staffing in one school created extra strain for the administration. Some teachers took maternity leave or were transferred mid-year, and there was a problem keeping teacher aides because central office "giveth and they taketh." Consequently, the situation was unsettling for the administrators.

Unclear Expectations

The fact that one administrator was uncertain of her role and her responsibilities had a negative effect on the relationship. This vice-principal wanted more role definition and direction: "I am creating my own job description as I go along. I would rather have some input or feedback as to what I might be doing that could or would be helpful." She did not know what was expected of her.

On the other hand, one principal felt that his vice-principal had expectations as to how he should deal with certain situations, and that he could not always meet them.

Poor Staff Relations

A divided staff in one school created some stress between the administrators as well. One member of the team described the difficulty in keeping the two groups of teachers operating in the best interest of the school. This individual disagreed with the principal's way of dealing with the situation, and said, "I try not to get involved, yet, because of my position, I feel that I am involved."

Potential of a Positive Working Relationship

Respondents discussed many of the advantageous effects of an administrative team that works well together. The benefits of a positive working relationship are many and varied.

Staff Benefits

Some respondents felt that their staffs were more comfortable in approaching any member of the team "if they could see the two

administrators really taking charge and working together." One vice-principal thought that the staff relied on them and appreciated the fact that there was always one administrator that was available to help them. Because both administrators kept each other well-informed as to what was happening in the school, the staff could approach either one for information and guidance.

More specifically, one vice-principal in an elementary/junior high school hoped that the strength of their team would help unify the staff: "If you have administrators who really believe in a common set of values and who really communicate and support each other, then you can eliminate a lot of those delineators between elementary and junior high. You can bridge a lot of gaps."

The example set by the administrators had a positive impact on staff. If the staff witnessed cohesion between the principal and vice-principal as well as a strong work ethic, they would work towards similar values and goals, as this principal detailed:

> Teachers don't begrudge putting in some extra time and energy if they see it being put in administratively. If they see some unity and agreement and a united front, there's maybe a willingness to accept decisions and to believe that this is a realistic direction that we should be going in. So, staff may buy in more readily to new ideas and new directions.

Student Benefits

If the administrators worked well together and worked hard, they would accomplish more for the students in terms of programs and activities. One principal stated, "I think the biggest thing is that the kids in the school benefit because we're able to do that much more than you otherwise would be able to." Another

individual speculated that, as a result of administrators that work well together, "you have kids who are learning better."

Unity

The school operates more smoothly when the administration works as a unit. The administrators in one school believed that, if all three of them were modelling similar values and operating on the same wavelength, they would realize their goals for the school much more quickly. "It makes the job easier if everybody's working together," stated one respondent. Another person said, "We've pulled together and we see progress being made as the team concept becomes more and more real. It's a whole lot easier to pull together than it is to pull individually."

Some respondents predicted that, if administrators were working in opposite directions, the staff would take sides and factions would form. Staff members could then "pit one against the other." Presenting a united front was considered to be important in maintaining unity amongst the staff.

Greater Efficiency and Accomplishment

Most administrators felt that they accomplished more because, in many cases, certain duties were allocated to individuals. By divvying up the duties, the tasks became more manageable, and each administrator was allowed "a little bit of breathing space."

The distribution of duties was particularly beneficial in one elementary/junior high school, where there was a wide range in terms of program and student discipline. There were also various

school functions and extracurricular activities that either one of the administrators attended. Also, if both were well-informed, one could follow through on a task that the other had started.

Teamwork also afforded coordination and cooperation. One principal claimed, "You accomplish a lot more if you're on the same wavelength and you're working hard together. Hopefully, two minds and two pairs of hands can provide more leadership, and you can take two or three extra steps over the course of a year than you otherwise would." Teamwork prompted more risk-taking because, together, two administrators were more apt to attempt something innovative and new than if each was functioning alone.

One principal recognized that a strong administrative team could plan ahead and perhaps prevent problems from arising. Another individual felt that, if a team worked well together, they could give maximum attention to both the task and the people.

Job Satisfaction

Administrators that worked well together also enjoyed their work and expressed high amounts of job satisfaction: "If the school is well-run, we get a great deal of satisfaction from it within ourselves." In a positive relationship, each individual felt a sense of importance. and, as one person said, "Everybody counts."

School Climate

The principal/assistant principal relationship had an effect on the school climate, and some of the respondents believed that

the administrators "set the tone." If the administrators did not work well together, it would be reflected in the staff and sensed by visitors to the school. One vice-principal agreed, "It becomes evident very quickly. You notice whether there's something missing there or something that could be improved upon."

Advice for Other Administrators

In regard to building a positive principal/vice-principal relationship, the administrators imparted advice for new administrators and those aspiring to administrative positions. The following recommendations are based on their own experience and generally emphasize many of the approaches and attitudes already discussed in this chapter. Therefore, this section serves as a review.

The suggestions are only those that were foremost on the respondents' minds at the time of the interviews; by no means does this list of items exhaust the wealth of knowledge and experience that they have to offer new administrators. Some items pertain either to principals only or just to assistant principals, whereas many recommendations are given for administrators in general.

Each piece of advice is introduced with a short phrase. I have tried to include, as often as possible, the exact words of the speaker.

Be Yourself.

One experienced principal recommended that new administrators retain their own distinguishing qualities and characteristics:

"I've seen too many people try to be something that they're not. I'm a strong believer in maximizing strengths and working from the positive. Don't try to be something you're not."

Another individual advised that, although making decisions together and working together are important, so is preserving one's individuality: "I don't want you to give up your own individuality and the skills and the strengths that you have." Administrators should remember the words of one other respondent: "Allow yourself to be you."

Listen.

Several respondents spoke of the importance of being a good listener. Listening is a way of gathering information and a method of learning. Vice-principals, especially if they were in a new position or a new school, were advised to "listen a lot" to the principal, to teachers, and to students.

One assistant principal perceived the principalship as a lonely position because principals must make decisions that are not always popular with the staff. Therefore, she felt that a vice-principal should serve as a sounding board: "The principal of a school needs to have somebody that they can come to and talk about things. You'll hear lots of things, and they shouldn't be going any further than your ears, but they have to have somebody that will listen and have an idea of what they're saying." Confidentiality must also be respected.

Give Responsibility.

This counsel was directed to principals, and it asked them to assign, to their assistants, the kinds of responsibilities that will help them learn: "Give them some responsibilities. Even though you do have the final say, try and give them responsibility for some decision-making. Otherwise, they're not going to learn."

The delegated duties should also give the vice-principals a sense of ownership and allow them to feel like a contributor to administration in the school: "There's a tendency sometimes with principals to hand over the things they don't like to handle, rather than to hand over the things that may help people grow." This advice was given by a principal who, as a vice-principal, had asked for various responsibilities and had been allowed to gain experience in a number of task areas.

Principals were again advised, by one assistant principal, "to treat [assistant principals] as up-and-coming administrators, to share with them. . . . Show them that you value them as part of a team administering the school."

Delegate and Let Go.

In conjunction with the previous item, principals must learn an important lesson, according to one administrator, and that is:

> Learn to delegate and, once you've delegated, let go. It's easy to say, "You've got responsibility for this," but, if you keep the hand in the pie, it doesn't do anything for developing the competency of the other person or the trust relationship that needs to be there.

Another principal reinforced the importance of developing the confidence in the other person's ability, but noted that it takes time: "The principal has got to be willing to surrender the reins and give [the assistant principal] the opportunity to do something. They've really got to watch; they might be giving someone a job and then telling them how to do it. I don't think the two go together."

Know Yourself.

New administrators were advised to know and assess their own capabilities as well as their own weaknesses:

> The principal needs to recognize his own strengths and weaknesses and then be honest with himself; not to try to do things or overdo things that he or she isn't good at, but rather to focus on the things you're good at. Accentuate your strengths and move that way.

Similarly, another respondent suggested that new administrators should utilize their expertise but should also recognize the areas in which they could grow: "If you've got an area of expertise, offer it. Don't keep it hidden under things. There will also be areas that are not strengths for you. Know what those are."

Take Initiative.

Administrators suggested that vice-principals should be willing to initiate ideas and actions, for taking initiative is as much their responsibility as it is the principals'. This assistant stated, "Offer to do things. Don't always be sitting around waiting to be asked to do things."

As she reflected on her first year as a vice-principal, another individual had not felt comfortable making decisions until she knew the situation. She had not realized that she had something to contribute or offer to the administrative team and the school as a whole:

> I found that I maybe spent too much time initially trying to get the feel of the school, trying to see what it was people wanted, trying to see what the community wanted, what the staff wanted, what everybody wanted. I forgot one thing, and that was that I had something to contribute.

Start Slowly.

In conjunction with the above advice, vice-principals were cautioned not to take on so many tasks that they were not able to perform them well. One respondent said, "Initially, you have to start slowly. Just do one or two [tasks] and do a good job of them." This advice came from both principals and vice-principals.

Be Wary of Creating Change.

Just as vice-principals were warned to start slowly, principals that were either new to the position or new to the school were advised not to instigate too much change at first:

> You have to be aware that lots of things happened before you came. . . . You have to be aware that too much change and too rapid a change can be very stressful and upsetting. I would really spend some time getting to know the school and getting to know the other person, and making a point to sit down and sort things out, and to provide time for that, especially in the early stages when you're getting things sorted out.

Likewise, new assistant principals were asked to respect what is already in place in a school.

Support Each Other.

Support was a key component of the working relationship, and administrators emphasized it as well in their recommendations. Vice-principals were counselled to fully support the principals' final decisions. "You never want to put yourself in a position," warned one assistant, "where you either are or look like you are undermining the principal."

Support is mutual, though, and principals should uphold their assistant principals too, especially as they strive to gain experience and develop confidence: "If the assistant principal is new and he or she blows it, it's really important for the principal to give him [or her] the support and backing. . . . You've got to give the assistant principal the opportunity to gain confidence." Mistakes have to be treated as growth experiences and, when assistant principals succeed, they should be "given a pat on the back."

Be a Mentor.

Some administrators perceived the principal as a mentor that encourages and trains the vice-principal. However, in assisting their assistants, principals should "help them resolve the problem; not hand them the solution."

Learn the Art of Compromise.

Decision-making was considered to be a shared responsibility in many relationships, and participants strived to reach agreement. One respondent felt that it was necessary "to learn

the art of compromise. . . . I have to accept the fact that all things aren't going to be done my way or the way that I would prefer them to be done." She also suggested that the time to make objections known was "before it becomes public knowledge."

Be Prepared to Learn from Each Other.

Through observation and by working together, administrators learned from each other's strengths and expertise. "You can learn something from everybody," remarked one individual, "even if it might be that that's not the way you would do it." Another vice-principal cautioned, "You're going to have a lot of frustrations if you're not open to other suggestions."

Learn From Your Mistakes.

Respondents advised administrators to be willing to make mistakes and learn from them. One principal explained, "Don't be afraid to admit your mistakes. None of us is perfect, and we screw up more often than we care to admit. If you make a mistake, admit it right away and then go on from there rather than try to hide it."

Be Inquisitive.

This advice was given by at least three of the respondents and was aimed towards assistant principals: "In the very early encounters with the principal, you should attempt to be open and inquisitive, inquiring. Be able to ask questions as to expectations that are there for you."

In the early stages of the relationship, the assistant should be prepared to check with the principal regarding background information or usual ways of dealing with certain problems. That checking will aid in decision-making and will become less necessary as the vice-principal learns and develops confidence.

In making decisions, administrators should be willing to approach or consult, not only colleagues, but teachers and anyone that is knowledgeable in the area of concern: "To be a successful administrator today, it's important that you realize there are other resources to fall back on."

Communicate Freely and Openly.

In order for communication to be effective, respondents agreed that it must be open and sincere. As one individual stated, "Say what you mean and mean what you say. Be honest." Roles must be clarified and visions shared: "Be open and upfront with your administrator in terms of what you expect in your role and share with [him or her] your vision."

In a positive relationship, each administrator is aware of all that is happening in the school and all that his or her colleague is doing. This knowledge allows them to be informative as well as prepared to make a decision when required: "Each person has to understand that it's their responsibility to keep the other person informed."

Make Time to Communicate.

This recommendation received a great deal of emphasis by the respondents. Without a doubt, administrators must be willing to "make the time available to meet with the principal, to talk to the principal." Several noted the importance of scheduling administration time together and planning a time to meet because, as one principal asserted, "We've got to give ourselves the time to work together."

Get to Know Each Other.

New administrators were advised to take time to get to know one another, to learn about each other's philosophy and vision, and to become familiar with the school. One individual recommended that administrators meet during the summer, before school begins, to discuss some of the issues:

> I don't think you can go through all of them, but there are a fair number of things you set up at the beginning of the year, like supervision and how you're going to handle extracurricular activities, who's going to look after what. That's one of the ways you can get to know each other.

Create a Vision and Strive for It.

Early in the relationship, administrators should discuss their philosophy, which would become the basis for their decisions and "would give you some farsightedness as to where you go or what you do." One principal recommended that professional goals and priorities be established, but he accentuated one: "Strive to achieve a goal where the bottom line is that each child's interests are being served and achieved."

Several respondents, but one administrative team in particular, stressed the importance of having a vision for the school and constantly checking that it was being realized. However, they cautioned that the vision will not be shared by all staff members: "You'll always have people, no matter how hard you work and no matter what you do, who don't believe in you." They encouraged administrators, not to get frustrated, but to be patient and to persevere towards the goal: "[Others] will share the vision, or they won't, but you can't ram it down anybody's throat. You can only go and carry your vision; light your torch and carry it."

Believe in Each Other.

New administrators were advised to develop a trust in each other's abilities and to have faith and confidence in each other. One principal firmly believed this to be true in her relationships with assistants as well as with staff, and she declared, "I think the most important thing you can give the people is your belief in what they do. . . . If you really believe in your people, then you bring out their strengths." Showing an appreciation for each other also brought out the best in them.

Work Together as a Team.

Many of the respondents perceived themselves as members of a team and encouraged other administrators to work together rather than in isolation. One vice-principal recognized the benefit in sharing duties and obtaining feedback from each other: "You can't

just go in your own direction and do your own thing. You have to have this coming together."

Another respondent, an advocate of the team approach, advised administrators to work as a team and to share responsibilities: "If it gets to be just the principal and his assistant, the big one and the little one, then I don't think it's going to work as well. It won't be half as effective and creative as two people that are very much equals."

Don't Make Snap Decisions.

One respondent warned about the making of hasty decisions, perhaps when emotions are high: "Listen. Be patient. Write down information, whatever it is, all you can get. Go home and sleep on it. Dialogue it with your other administrators. Come up with a decision, and you have a far better chance of not making poor decisions if you do it that way."

Be Prepared to Work Hard.

This advice speaks for itself, but one principal detailed: "Some people have the mistaken perception that you get into administration so you can avoid all the hard work in the classroom. It's just a different kind of hard work."

Take Administration Courses.

Many of the administrators studied saw the benefit in taking courses to either prepare for a position or enrich one's knowledge and skills. To be effective instructional leaders, one principal felt that administrators must be knowledgeable of recent

educational research. Another very experienced administrator suggested that individuals should attend seminars and workshops that deal with educational administration: "Get as much information as you can about the role. . . . You should get some background administration courses."

Treat the Relationship as a Growth Experience.

One principal recommended that members of an administrative team should strive to grow professionally. He perceived his relationship with the assistant in this manner: "I want the experience to be a growth experience, not only for you but for me. . . . You're not so much a challenge for me but another experience for me that I am grateful for. Now, how can we work so that we can both grow?"

Themes

During analysis, several themes emerged from the data.

A predominant theme is the oneness of the administrators in a school. Their decisions are influenced by a similar philosophy towards children and education; they strive for agreement and present a united front to staff, parents, and students; and their work is guided by common goals and a shared vision for the school. When there is unity and support within the team, there is strength, impetus, and efficiency.

On the other hand, there is diversity between and within each relationship. No two working relationships are exactly alike because the individuals involved in each are unique, and, although

there is unity and oneness, each administrator possesses abilities and strengths that complement those of the other. This complementarity allows for some specialization of duties, but also stimulates learning and sharing between administrators. It lends itself to objectivity and discussion. It gives the team balance and wholeness.

Another unifying factor is the team work amongst the administrators. Many duties and responsibilities are shared, and decisions are often made as a team or after consultation with each other. Indeed, administration of the school is viewed as a shared responsibility, and both principal and assistant principal(s) are involved, responsible, and valued. Amongst administrators that work well together, collegiality is evident. There is a willingness and a desire to function as a team.

Each positive relationship is characterized by growth and learning. Administrators are always learning more about each other and their roles. They learn how to more effectively administer a school and develop new skills, methods, and strategies. They learn from personal and shared experiences, from the example they set for each other, and from the abilities they possess and demonstrate. Growth is inevitable where there is openness and where administrators share both their strengths and weaknesses. A relationship evolves during the period of time that members of a team work together, and, as in any relationship, it grows to be stronger and more effective.

The essential ingredient that facilitates learning and growth, oneness and understanding, and teamwork is communication, which is the cornerstone and power system of the relationship. Communication allows for sharing of ideas, feelings, and concerns. Effective decision-making is dependent on it. Through communication, administrators maintain a high level of school awareness, gain the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions, and plan courses of action that abide by school philosophy and meet educational goals. For these reasons, shared administration time is so important.

Closely related to communication is the quality of openness. The first is ineffective without the second. Administrators must be ready to listen and approachable for discussion. They must be open to new ideas and perspectives, to change, and to growth. They must be willing to share responsibility and prepared to work together. To promote openness and communication, honesty and frankness must be combined with tact and professionalism.

These are the components of a positive principal/assistant principal relationship. As interrelated constituents, they comprise the very framework of such a relationship.

This last chapter provided a thorough analysis of the data. The findings were organized into nine major categories, the largest of which described the factors contributing to a positive working relationship between principals and assistant principals. The last category included advice for new administrators and those

aspiring to administrative positions. The chapter concluded with the presentation of the underlying themes found in the data.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions, Implications, and Reflections

This final chapter provides a summary of the research methodology and findings. Some personal reflections on the study are presented, and the findings are then related to the literature. The chapter also outlines some implications for educational administration and further research.

Summary

The objective of this research was to investigate the working relationships between principals and their assistant principals in order to gain a greater understanding of how school administrators work together in an effective and positive manner.

A review of the literature indicated a lack of information in this area and a need for a more concentrated or focused study of the principal/assistant principal relationship in Alberta schools. The literature review centered around the administrative team approach, the changing role of the assistant principal, and the importance of effective communication and collaboration.

Thirteen school administrators, comprising six administrative teams, were then interviewed. During a comprehensive analysis of the data, a number of ideas surfaced, ideas that seemed to characterize a positive principal/vice-principal relationship.

The working relationships developed and evolved over time. Initially, as the administrators were getting to know one another

and were creating a common philosophy, the interaction was characterized by caution and consultation. As the relationship developed and as they shared more experiences, the individuals gained a better understanding of each other, greater trust and confidence, a clearer vision, and improved communication. Most administrators acknowledged a desire for further growth.

Duties were allocated according to the amount of administration time each individual had, but were also influenced by individual strengths and interests as well as equity. Duties were sometimes divided by grade levels. Although each administrator had specific duties, many responsibilities were shared. The administrators exercised initiative in completing tasks. Principals delegated some duties to their assistants but then gave them the freedom to deal with them independently.

Communication was identified as an inherent constituent of a positive working relationship. Oral communication was most common, and it was frequent but brief. Through communication, administrators kept informed, consulted with one another, and engaged in joint planning. The need for common administration time was emphasized for it facilitated consultation, shared planning sessions, and frequent contact.

Although they conferred with each other, the administrators made certain decisions independently. Still, the principal always had the ultimate responsibility and the final say. In most of the successful working relationships, there was a great deal of shared

decision-making. Most members of the administrative teams experienced a sense of involvement and, therefore, commitment.

Many factors were identified as being contributory to a positive relationship. Time was needed for members of the team to gain knowledge and understanding of each other. In a positive relationship, the administrators shared a similar philosophy toward children and education. However, they also brought to the school complementary skills, talents, and experiences.

The relationships were founded on mutual trust, respect, and support. The trust relationship developed with time and with recognition of each other's talents and abilities. Support for one another was essential and was evident in policy development and implementation. Team members presented a united front, and, once a decision was made, the administrators supported it wholely.

Demographic variables, such as years of administrative experience and years of working together, were also found to have a bearing on the working relationship. Physical factors, including the close proximity of their offices and the size of the school, had an effect on the relationship as well.

Respondents identified certain factors that hindered the full development of a positive working relationship. They also outlined the benefits of a positive relationship to students and staff and described its effects on such variables as school climate and job satisfaction.

Reflections

Relationships between individuals are very complex, and the factors that influence them are varied and interrelated. Because of its complexity, each working relationship I studied was unique and was shaped differently. The details of each relationship varied, and they were developed and negotiated by individuals and influenced by a diverse number of factors. There were different degrees of teamwork, and the attitudes of individuals, especially the principal, had an effect on how duties would be allocated and how involved the vice-principal would be. Despite the differences, certain qualities and aspects were evident in all the relationships studied. It was these factors that I attempted to report in this document.

Interestingly, I discovered that the factors contributing to a positive working relationship are similar to those qualities in any type of positive personal relationship. In reflection now, I find the conclusions of this study to be rather commonsensical and patent; yet, in my own experience and in discussing the topic with the participants as well as other school administrators, the factors that contribute to a positive working relationship are not always so obvious in actuality.

I was struck by the power that principals have in determining the role of assistant principals. Whether or not duties will be shared or designated is decided by the principals, and the vice-principals are, basically, at their mercy. Whereas the

administrators perceived the role of the assistant principal as that of a helper, I noted that, in effect, the principal plays a similar role in that he or she guides and trains the assistant.

The positive nature of the relationship was apparent in the observations I made on my school visits during data collection. The individuals had an obvious liking for each other. I am reminded of a comment made by a participant in the pilot study. After describing various factors that contribute to a positive working relationship with his principal, the individual remarked, "Besides that, I think we like each other, which is important."

After interviewing the thirteen participants in the study, I realized that a viable, rewarding relationship requires a determined and conscious effort from the individuals involved. It is characterized by cooperation, compromise, commitment, and collaboration.

I am, therefore, impressed with the team approach to administration that was clearly practised in some of the schools. After analyzing the data, I lean strongly towards shared responsibilities, shared decision-making, and a partnership in administration. I would like to see associate principalships in schools, as Bates and Shank (1983) described. The advantages of working together were clear, and the administrators in a school would benefit greatly from an evaluation of their working relationship.

I recognize now, more keenly than ever, how important it is that administrators in a school build a positive working relationship that constitutes a partnership; that is based on respect, trust, support, and openness; and that has, for a foundation, an effective system of communication and a shared vision for the school.

Relating the Findings to the Literature

In many respects, the study reinforces the ideas and issues that were described in the literature. However, the findings provide many new insights and augment existing literature on the principal/assistant principal relationship.

The administrative team is becoming a more common approach (Childress, 1973; Sprague, 1973; Gross, Shapiro, & Meehan, 1980; and others), and administrators seem to be striving to that ideal, although there are different shades or degrees of teamwork. Two of the vice-principals studied could be considered to be the associate principals that Bates & Shank (1983) described.

Just as Rankin (1980), Gross et al. (1980), and many other writers emphasized in their articles, effective communication and openness were perceived, by the respondents, to be very important ingredients in the working relationship. The research findings strongly confirm that positive working relationships between principals and their assistants exhibit the six basic characteristics of an effective management team as outlined by Erickson & Gmelch (1977).

The findings clearly confirmed Lieberman's (1986) work in the area of collaboration between principal and assistant principal. The findings also supported Millard's (1984) conclusions regarding the benefits of administrative teamwork.

As was stated in the literature, the principal does have a great influence on the kind of working relationship that develops. The principal largely decides on whether the two work as a team, how involved the assistant principal will be, and how much authority the assistant will have.

It is difficult to say whether or not the role of the assistant principal is changing, because the role seems to vary depending upon the school district, the school, and even the principal. Perceptions of the role have not changed dramatically. Generally, assistants still view the position as a stepping stone rather than a career. Many of them continue to see themselves as helpers and the principals as the leaders. Indeed, they are bound by their very title: assistant principal.

In accordance with Brimm (1976), some of the vice-principals took initiative in their work and, consequently, influenced their working relationships.

Implications

Research of any kind promotes improvement, advancement, and learning in the area of study. Based on the findings, some areas deserving of consideration are now offered. These suggestions, if put to practice, may result in more positive principal/assistant

principal relationships, more effective school administration, and improved educational service.

Educational Administration

Frequent, open communication is a key component in any relationship. Administrators must schedule administration time together so they can meet to discuss and communicate as often as is needed. It is very important that administrators keep each other informed and that they consult each other during the decision making process.

Principals play a major role in determining both the role of the assistant principal and the nature of their working relationship. They are in a position to train and coach assistant principals, to share with them the knowledge and skills gained through experience, and to provide opportunities for assistant principals to acquire these skills.

Assistant principals must be given a sense of responsibility and involvement in school administration. Job satisfaction and commitment may increase if vice-principals feel that they have an important part to play in the school. This sense of partnership seems to be attained through teamwork and through a balanced, equitable distribution of administrative tasks.

If the assistant principalship is truly to be a training ground as many of the participants perceived the position to be, the job description for assistant principals should maximize the opportunity for learning and practising a variety of

administrative skills. The role of the vice-principal may be enhanced through shared responsibilities with the principal and a team approach to administration. School boards ought to encourage a team approach and should ensure an effective training program for assistant principals.

All administrators, but principals in particular, should evaluate their leadership, recognize their influence on the principal/assistant principal relationship, and make a conscious effort at developing a more positive working relationship. This may involve assessments of the decision-making process, the allocation of duties, and their system of communication. After an evaluation of individual strengths and weaknesses, administrators could then explore ways in which the relationship could grow stronger and more effective.

As in any type of relationship, it takes time for the relationship to develop and grow. Administrators must allow time to get to know and understand one another. Continuous growth can take place as the administrators learn from each other and from shared experiences.

Hindering factors, such as lack of shared administration time and communication breakdown, should be addressed and resolved. Developing a positive working relationship will have beneficial effects, not only on the administration, but on students, staff, and the school in general.

It would be wise for school boards to closely consider the complementary strengths and qualities of individuals, as well as their educational philosophies, when hiring or placing administrators.

It would also be wise to encourage present administrators and those aspiring to such positions to take appropriate courses in educational administration. Professional development should be promoted so that administrators stay abreast of educational research.

Because the working relationship between the principal and the assistant principal has an effect on the staff, the students, and the school in general, the administrators themselves should be involved in selecting a compatible, complementary working partner.

Partnering individuals for a few years may allow the working relationship to develop to a point that it is highly positive and effective. On the other hand, administrators should be moved from time to time so they can stimulate new growth in other administrative teams and grow individually as well.

It may be wise not to change both administrators in a school at the same time. Tenured administrators can pass on school traditions and effective administrative practices to newcomers. This allows for some stability and continuity in the administration of the school.

Generally, administrators should pay heed to the advice offered by the participants in this study. Their counsel, based

on their own experiences and insights, was given with the intent of helping other administrative teams establish positive working relationships.

Further Research

Because this study was delimited to principals and assistant principals in elementary and elementary/junior high schools, and all but one of the administrative teams studied had one assistant principal, it may be useful to study principal/assistant principal relationships in high schools and junior/senior high schools and to study larger administrative teams that include two or three assistant principals.

It may be worthy to study, specifically, the team approach as it is used in a particular school or in a group of schools where it is consciously and closely followed. The total team approach includes parents, students, teachers, school administrators, and central office staff. It would be beneficial to investigate how these groups work together, especially in areas such as decision-making and planning.

An investigation of other relationships, such as those between students and teachers and between teachers and administrators, may also reveal significant information concerning staff morale, job satisfaction, student learning, and school effectiveness.

Future research could focus on particular aspects of the principal/vice-principal relationship: for example, communication

or the effects of the relationship on school effectiveness and school climate.

Other types of research could be conducted in this area in the future. For instance, an ethnographic study of a principal/assistant principal relationship over two years may reveal how the relationship develops and changes over time. Non-participant observation, which was not feasible in this particular research, could also reveal another dimension to the relationships studied.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CORRESPONDENCE

May 17, 1988

Dear

I'd like to sincerely thank you for the time you set aside for our recent interview but also for the wealth of information you have shared and your spirit of cooperation in this research.

Attached is the transcript of our interview regarding the principal/assistant principal relationship. I have taken the liberty to correct grammatical errors and to omit incomplete ideas. Interview questions have been printed in bold type.

Please read through the transcript with the purpose of ensuring that what I have transcribed conveys your intended meaning. Feel free to clarify any of your responses and, if other ideas come to mind as you read the transcript, to insert this additional information. You may write directly on the transcript, either in the margins or on the back of each page. If there are certain remarks and comments that you would like me to disregard in the data analysis, please indicate the specific sections.

You may find some of my own questions in the margins. I would greatly appreciate your clarification of these areas.

If it is convenient for you, I'd like to drop by the school to collect your revised interview transcript on **Tuesday morning, May 24**. Unless you would like to see me regarding the transcript or any aspect of the research, perhaps I could collect the transcript from the school secretary in the main office.

Once again, I'd like to assure you that you and your school will remain anonymous and that all information is being treated confidentially. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call me at home (439-1862).

Thank you kindly.

Sincerely,

Louis Kloster

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview Questions

- Principals -

Your Role in General

1. a. In general, what do you perceive as being your role as a principal?

   b. How do you perceive the assistant principal's role in relation to your own?

Duties and Responsibilities

2. Over what matters do you have authority and responsibility?

3. How are duties and responsibilities decided upon or allocated between you and your co-administrator?

Your Working Relationship

4. How do you and your co-administrator work together in performing administrative duties?

5. a. Describe the manner in which you and your co-administrator communicate regarding administrative matters?

   b. How do you interact with your co-administrator on a typical day? Describe this interaction.

6. a. How do you and your co-administrator make administrative decisions?

   b. Can you illustrate with a recent example?

7. To what extent do you consider that you and the principal form an administrative team?

Contributing Factors

8. a. What are the personal factors that you consider to contribute to a positive working relationship with your co-administrator?

   b. What qualities or factors in the work situation have an effect on your working relationship?

(Interview Questions continued)

c. Are there any factors, personal or situational, that hinder the development of a positive working relationship between you and your co-administrator?

Potential of a Positive Relationship

9. What is the potential of a pair of administrators who work well together?

10. Has your working relationship grown as much as you'd like? In what ways do you see your working relationship continuing to grow? Please explain.

Advice for Other Administrators

11. In regards to building a positive working relationship with your co-administrator, what advice do you have for new administrators and those aspiring to administrative positions?

Selecting and Training an Assistant Principal

12. a. Did you have a part in selecting your vice-principal? Please describe.

b. What qualities or characteristics do you look for in selecting a co-administrator?

c. What part do you play in training or preparing your assistant principal for administrative duties?

Interview Questions

- Assistant Principals -

Your Role in General

1. a. In general, what do you perceive as being your role as an assistant principal?

   b. In general, how do you perceive the principal's role in relation to your own?

   c. How do you view the vice-principalship: as a stepping stone, as a career, or in a different way?

Duties and Responsibilities

2. Over what matters do you have authority and responsibility?

3. How are duties and responsibilities decided upon or allocated between you and your co-administrator?

4. How do you and your co-administrator work together in performing administrative duties?

Your Working Relationship

5. a. Describe the manner in which you and your co-administrator communicate regarding administrative matters?

   b. How do you interact with your co-administrator on a typical day? Describe your interaction.

6. a. How do you and your co-administrator make administrative decisions?

   b. Can you illustrate with a recent example?

7. To what extent do you consider that you and the principal form an administrative team?

Contributing Factors

8. a. What are the personal factors that you consider to contribute to a positive working relationship with your co-administrator?

(Interview Questions continued)

b. What qualities or factors in the work situation have an effect on your working relationship?

c. Are there any factors, personal or situational, that hinder the development of a positive working relationship between you and your co-administrator?

Potential of a Positive Relationship

9. What is the potential of a pair of administrators who work well together?

10. Do you see room for improvement in your working relationship? If so, please describe.

Advice for Other Administrators

11. In regards to building a positive working relationship with your co-administrator, what advice do you have for new administrators and those aspiring to administrative positions?